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POLL RESULTS

Do you think there should have been a run-off in the non-voting delegate election, since none of the candidates won a majority of the votes?

Yes-24

No-18

No opinion-3

Sunday, December 14, 2008

76 without a government budget for FY 2009
DAYS

INSIDE



Miss World

Russian Kseniya Sukhinova is crowned the 58th Miss World after a two-hour spectacle in South Africa.

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Relaxed visa rules for foreign nurses pushed. **PAGE 3**

Camacho: I'm not working for Kilili. **PAGE 5**

PUC hearing draws dismal crowd



KRISTI EATON

CUC executive director Antonio Muña follows along as Georgetown consultants Jamshed Madan and Larry Gawlik read the stipulated orders that the two parties agreed upon. Georgetown legal counsel Lilian Tenorio sits in between.

By KRISTI EATON
kristi_eaton@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Public opinion was mixed at the conclusion of a sparsely attended Public Utilities Commission hearing held Friday at the Senate chamber of the Legislature on Capital Hill.

About 15 people, many of whom were legislators, were present at one point during the hearing, but by the end of the three-hour hearing, only a handful stayed for the public comment portion.

Wesley Bogdan, who was

the first to speak before the commission, said he was overwhelmed by the amount of information discussed during the meeting and disturbed that the public was going to have to pay for mistakes of the past.

See PUC on Page 4

NMI economic report numbers don't add up

By KRISTI EATON
kristi_eaton@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Records show data used to illustrate the impact of federal laws on the CNMI economy differed from earlier data the CNMI submitted to the U.S. government.

Malcolm McPhee, one of the authors of the *Comprehen-*



sive Assessment of the CNMI Economy: Economic Impact of Federal Laws on the CNMI, acknowledged Thursday last week the difficulty he and co-

See NMI on Page 4

CUC, consultants iron out 4 stipulations

By KRISTI EATON
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REPORTER

During a three-hour hearing Friday night before the Public Utilities Commission, officials from Georgetown Consult-

ing Group and the Commonwealth Utilities Corp., detailed stipulation agreements relating to power rates and the utility company's financial future.

The four stipulations relate to laws that mandate PUC and

CUC to meet certain requirements relating to utilities.

Under Public Law 16-2, PUC must review and set utility rates before the Dec. 31, 2008, deadline set by law. If the PUC

See CUC on Page 4



AIRBORNE GREETINGS

GERALDINE CAMACHO

Paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division stationed at Ft. Bragg, North Carolina, greet the islands of Saipan, Tinian and Rota a very merry Airborne Christmas and a Happy New Year. From left, top row: Spc. Valerie Santillan, Spc. Mike Camacho, Sgt. Lee Taimanao, and Sgt. Angelito Kiyoshi. Second row: Spc. Ferdinand Palacios, Sgt. Kieran Aquino, Pfc. Peter Deleon Guerrero, and Pfc. Lyle Celis. Third row: Sgt. Chayse Santos, Spc. Frankie Camacho, SSgt. Carlos Santillan, and Pfc. John Yifith. Bottom row: Spc. Ricky Ichihara and Spc. Herman Duenas.

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Local

Tinian clinic chief prosecuted for alleged domestic violence

The Attorney General's Office has filed formal charges against Tinian Health Center resident director Henry Ernie U. Hofschneider for his alleged involvement in a domestic violence incident.

Hofschneider, 52, was only charged with assault and battery. The defendant was initially arrested for assault and battery, disturbing the peace, and interfering with a domestic violence report.

Chief Prosecutor Kevin Lynch stated in the charging information that on Oct. 2, 2008, Hofschneider "did unlawfully strike, beat, wound, or otherwise caused bodily harm" to his

common-law spouse.

Hofschneider pleaded not guilty.

Detective Barbara K. Arend stated in her report that on Oct. 2, 2008, at 3:10am a minor called Tinian DPS 911 and requested for someone to pick up her mother who was drunk.

After a few minutes, the victim told a responding police officer that she was having a painful headache and was feeling drowsy.

The victim showed the officer a bump on the left side of her head, possibly as a result of a beating.

The child told police that

she woke up because her parents were arguing in the living room.

The child allegedly saw Hofschneider slapping her mother and her mother slapping him back. Hofschneider then allegedly pushed the victim hard, causing her to fall on the floor on her back.

The victim told the daughter to call the police, but Hofschneider allegedly prevented her from doing so, saying her mother was just drunk.

When Hofschneider left the room, the minor locked the door and called 911 for police assistance. **(Ferdie de la Torre)**

Tinian honors three war heroes



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Tinian Mayor Jose P. San Nicolas, left, poses with the families of the late Staff Sergeant Julian Aquiningoc Manglona, Seaman AnaMarie San Nicolas Camacho and Specialist Victor Michael Fontanilla after the unveiling of their pictures at the West Tinian International Airport on Saturday, Dec. 6, 2008.

Tinian Mayor Jose P. San Nicolas unveiled photographs of Tinian's three war heroes at the West Tinian International Airport on Saturday, Dec. 6, 2008. The three war heroes are Staff

Sergeant Julian Aquiningoc Manglona, Seaman AnaMarie San Nicolas Camacho and Specialist Victor Michael Fontanilla. All three were killed while serving their country in the U.S.

Armed Forces.

"It is important that we, the people of Tinian, honor our war heroes. They gave the ultimate sacrifice for the sake of freedom for all United States citizens," said San Nicolas.

Present at the unveiling ceremony were Mr. and Mrs. Vicente M. Manglona, parents of the late Julian A. Manglona; Mr. and Mrs. Ramon K. Quichocho, parents of the late Victor Fontanilla; Mrs. Ana San Nicolas Cruz and Jorgianna San Nicolas Paulino, grandmother and sister of the late AnaMarie San Nicolas Camacho.

"These photographs will hang prominently in the arrival terminal for all residents and visitors to see. May we never forget the sacrifice and heroism during this time of war and for years to come," the mayor said.

San Nicolas personally invited over 20 man'amko to witness the ceremony. The photos were blessed by Fr. Isidro Ogomuro, pastor of the San Jose Church Parish. Later, the mayor hosted lunch for the soldiers' families and the man'amko at the Tinian Dynasty Hotel and Casino.

The event was made possible with the help of the families of the three soldiers, the management and staff of the Commonwealth Ports Authority, and the CNMI Veteran's Affairs Office. **(PR)**



Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
State Rehabilitation Council
FY 09 1st General Membership Meeting
PO Box 501521 Saipan, MP 96950, TEL.: (670) 322-6537 FAX: (670) 322-6536
TTY (670) 322-6449 EMAIL: voc.rehab@saipan.com



PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to I CMC 99910, the public is advised that the State Rehabilitation Council will hold its FY 09 1st General Membership Meeting on Thursday, December 18, 2008 at the Azucena Room, Fiesta Resort Hotel at 10:00am-2:00pm. Interested individuals are welcome to attend.

AGENDA

- I. Preliminaries
 - A. Roll Call
 - B. Review & Adoption of Agenda
 - C. Review & Adoption of 6/25/2008 Minutes
- II. Reports
 - A. OVR Director
 - B. SRC Chairman
- III. Old Business
 - A. Vacancy Appointments Status
- IV. New Business
 - A. Election of Officers
 - B. Committee Chair Appointments
 - C. Approval of 2009 SRC Resource Plan
- V. Consumer Forum
- VI. Announcements/Miscellaneous
- VII. Adjournment

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), individuals who wish to attend the meeting but require accommodations such as large print or sign language interpreters, are asked to call 3226537(voice) or 322-6449(ITY). Please contact Magin Iginoef(Council Liaison) two days in advanced for necessary arrangements.

/s/ Jesus Elameto
SRC Vice-Chairperson

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Relaxed visa rules for foreign nurses pushed

By KRISTI EATON
kristi_eaton@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Due to the severe lack of nurses within the U.S. healthcare industry, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services ombudsman is recommending expediting green card applications for nurses.

This could help the CNMI's Department of Public Health, as the majority of nurses at the Commonwealth Health Center are nonresidents.

"Visa availability continues to be the principal obstacle for many immigrants and non-immigrants seeking employment in the United States, and the number of visas available can only be addressed

through legislation," according to the directive.

The United States will require 1.2 million registered nurses by 2014 to meet demand, the directive notes, citing a 2007 study conducted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

"The nursing shortage detrimentally affects the healthcare industry by decreasing the quality of healthcare," the directive reads.

The USCIS should separate and prioritize visa applications for nurses in an effort to alleviate the problem, the ombudsman said.

A similar process was used in 2005 to alleviate a shortage.

University of Loyola president Dr. Johnny Fong said the move would help bring more students to the univer-

sity. Students attending the University will know once they graduate they will be able to find employment in

the United States, he said.

It also will help CHC and the CNMI. As students graduate from the college, the hospital will be first choice for the influx of new nursing graduates, he said.

Eleven nurses will gradu-

ate from the University of Loyola this week, and 20 students recently graduated from Emmanuel College's nursing program. Northern Marianas College also offers associate degrees in nursing.

Hotel sued over alleged non-payment of gas supply

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_deltorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

An operator of gasoline stations has sued Hotel Riviera Saipan Inc. and its manager and general manager for allegedly refusing to pay \$9,255 as payment for diesel gas supply.

AA Enterprises Inc. sued Hotel Riviera Saipan Inc., its manager Jun Young Lee, and general manager Mi Ran Jang, for breach of contract.

AA Enterprises, through lawyer Robert T. Torres, asked the Superior Court to order the defendant to pay the principal sum, plus interest, attorney's fees, and court costs.

Saipan Tribune contacted yesterday the managers to get their side, but they were not available.

Torres stated in the complaint that on July 25, 2008, his client provided diesel gas to Hotel Riviera Saipan in the

amount of \$4,720.

The lawyer said Hotel Riviera Saipan paid \$1,585 on Sept. 18, 2008, and \$2,000 on Oct. 1, 2008, leaving a balance of \$1,135.

Torres said that on Aug. 8, 2008, AA Enterprises again provided diesel gas to the defendant in the amount of \$4,088, but no payments were made upon this invoice.

He alleged that on Aug. 9, 2008, again AA provided die-

sel gas to the defendant in the amount of \$4,032, but no payments were made again.

Torres said that on Nov. 1, 2008, his client sent a statement of account, showing the total amount owed at \$9,255.

"Notwithstanding each demand and notice, defendant failed, refused, and neglected, and still fails, refuses, and neglects to pay the full sum owed to the plaintiff," the lawyer said.

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CUC

From Page 1

fails to meet this deadline, CUC will be forced to reduce power rates down to

17 cents per kWh.

CUC, under Public Law 16-17, must implement a business plan detailing how the company will achieve financial independence and provide reliable utility service.

CUC and Georgetown each submitted testimony prior to the hearing, but because the parties had sat down and agreed upon the stipulations prior to the hearing, individual testimony was not read. Instead, the agreed-upon

stipulations were discussed with the PUC commissioners asking questions. Members of the public were also given the chance to comment.

The 17 pages of stipulations (*see sidebar*) made recommendations to PUC about CUC's business plan, base rate and fluctuating rate, and contract protocols.

Most questions by PUC commissioners to CUC and Georgetown officials were for clarification. Georgetown president Jamshed Madan and Larry Gawlik read the stipulations, with CUC executive director Antonio Muña adding any additional information or answering the commissioners' questions.

One of the few times Muña was questioned concerned costs recovered under the proposed six-month fuel tariff. Both CUC and Georgetown agree on a six-month levelized energy adjustment clause. Currently, CUC uses a monthly fluctuating electric rate.

The commissioners voiced concern on making sure the funds were properly accounted for.

"With regards to the reserves, let's say for example we're in the six month LEAC period and every month, hypothetically, CUC is able to realize a reserve of \$200,000 a month. So after four months, that's \$800,000. Who would have control over those funds, number one, and number two, how do we ensure they are not misused?" PUC chair Viola Alepuyo asked.

Under the agreed-upon stipulations, only one of the five reserves established by the LEAC would be under the control of the PUC and subject to

PUC approval for disbursement or re-programming.

"Will there be a separate bank account for these funds as we accumulate them? No," Muña said.

PUC commissioner Kimberlyn King-Hinds then voiced her concern.

"I guess my problem isn't building reserves," she said. "But if someone tomorrow were to declare a state of emergency somewhere and that money is in a general fund, they can pretty much tap into that reserve, right?"

Muña responded by explaining that CUC's general fund is also the general operating account and is there for emergencies.

"Our situation, although stable, we're still in critical condition," Muña said. "If our operating costs are not sufficient, then tapping into this reserve will be the answer."

He added that CUC would make sure all monies are accounted for.

During a later portion of the hearing, PUC commissioner Kyle Calabrese asked why the stipulations included a part about emergency procurements. The section states that under a governor's state of emergency PUC approval is not required for contracts, which is already the case.

Lillian Tenorio, legal counsel for Georgetown, said it was the second part of the section that was important. It states that if an emergency procurement takes place, CUC must file details of the procurement within 28 days, and any emergency procurement funded by anything but bond revenues must be included in a CIP expenditure ceiling.

difference of 716. Population in 1980 was 17,440 according to the report, while the 1980 Commerce census statistics reports the population level at 16,780—660 less than the economic study's number.

A footnote to the numbers said the report's estimates differed from numbers provided in a 1999 economic impact report, noting that the McPhee report uses numbers based on April 1 counts. It did not state when the previous report counts were held.

On Thursday, McPhee said that, because of multiple sources of data, he and Conway often had trouble determining what figure to use.

"That was really a difficult process," he said. "Sometimes we had long conversations on which population figures were accurate."

Conway worked with the Commerce Department through e-mail to settle on numbers, McPhee said. McPhee, who came out to the CNMI to discuss the report, could not be reached Friday as he was returning to the United States.

Both McPhee's report as well as the GAO's report noted the difficulty in obtaining reliable figures.

Numbers for the labor force were also difficult to determine. For one year there might be five different sources with five different numbers. It was a unique situation for Conway who is used to agencies in the United States, where numbers are readily available, McPhee said.

"Dr. Conway had to tear his hair out some times," he added.

The Comprehensive Assessment of the CNMI Economy: Economic Impact of Federal Laws on the CNMI was completed with a federal grant from the U.S. Interior Department. A request for proposals was placed and a team was chosen and contracted with the Office of the Governor.

GUIDE TO CUC STIPULATIONS

By KRISTI EATON
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REPORTER

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. and Georgetown Consultants agreed on four stipulations that they recommended to the Public Utilities Commission at a hearing Friday night. PUC will use the information to help determine new power rates before Dec. 31, 2008.

Here is an easy to understand guide to the stipulations.

Adjusting CUC's electric rate structure

■ Currently, CUC adjusts the electric rate every month. For the month of December it is 20.7 cents per kilowatt-hour.

■ CUC and Georgetown agree on a six-month levelized energy adjustment clause (LEAC) that would become effective Jan. 1, 2009.

■ Under the tariff, CUC would be able to recover: fuel and generation lubricant costs and delivered fuel and other costs required by the supplier. The LEAC tariff also would factor in CUC's ability to establish and maintain a 30-day fuel inventory and to develop a reserve to support the availability and efficiency of generating units.

■ The reserves used to support the generating units would not be dispersed or reprogrammed without PUC approval. The money will be put in a separate account and cannot be co-mingled with other CUC funds or reserves.

■ CUC would be able to petition to change the six-month LEAC if under recovery reaches \$350,000

■ The first LEAC would be set from Jan. 1, 2009, to March 30, 2009, with subsequent tariffs set for six months

■ New LEACs would be set every April 1 and October 1 to coincide with fiscal years

Business Plan

■ Public Law 16-17 mandates CUC create a business plan detailing how it will achieve financial independence and provide reliable electric service

■ CUC and Georgetown agree the PUC must review and approve the business plan

■ Under the stipulated agreements, CUC and Georgetown will work together, under PUC's oversight, to for-

mulate a plan before an April 2009 public workshop. The public workshop will share the plan components and schedule of steps. PUC will review and take action on the plan at their June/July 2009 meeting.

■ CUC and Georgetown agree two challenges are high priority: the preferred stock transaction between CUC and the Commonwealth Development Authority and the restoration of Saipan's Power Plant generation. CUC and Georgetown will work together to prepare a restoration plan and present it to PUC for review and approval in April 2009

■ CUC and Georgetown ask PUC to waive the requirements of Public Law 15-87, which mandates CUC meet certain renewable energy requirements by Dec. 31, 2008.

Reviewing CUC's base rate

■ Currently, CUC's base rate remains fixed each month.

■ Both CUC and Georgetown agree that more work needs to be done before PUC considers restructuring the base rate, and recommend a base rate hearing before the end of 2009.

■ A PUC public workshop on restructuring the base rate should be conducted in April 2009

Protocol for reviewing contracts

■ CUC and Georgetown recommend PUC review prior to any invitations to bid or requests for proposals are published

■ The parties agree that a trigger of \$350,000 be established for contract review

■ A threshold of \$350,000 also should be set for "divestitures," but CUC and Georgetown agree this should not include inventory

■ If CUC receives only one procurement bid, CUC must provide PUC with justification as to why the bid should be approved

■ Emergency procurements, such as those rendered under a Governor's state of emergency, does not need PUC approval

■ Protocol will not apply for ongoing CUC procurements

■ Any extension of the Aggreko contract or the CUC/CDA stock transaction require PUC review and approval

egation, said the island is interested in providing renewable energy. He ended his comments by saying he would like to participate more in discussions and offered additional assistance. Hocog was one of the proponents of Public Law 16-17, which seeks to privatize CUC and establishes the business plan discussed during the hearing.

Like Bogdan, Jean Arthur said she was overwhelmed with the amount of information and had a hard time understanding what was being discussed. Arthur said she did not read the stipulations that were disseminated, but wanted to listen to the hearing "as a mother or grandmother would."

Instead, she said, she was unable to understand the process. When she asked for clarification about the Georgetown Consultants role, she was reminded that it was not a question-and-answer portion, but a chance for the public to share their thoughts. She said it sounded like the Georgetown Consultants were trying to sell their service.

CUC's insolvency was Rep. Tina Sablan's first concern. Earlier in the testimony, officials said that once CUC was able to get rid of its debt to the Commonwealth Development Authority, the utility company would become solvent. Sablan objected to that, referring to past reports

on CUC's finances.

"If I recall, current liabilities far exceed \$100 million," she said.

How do you penalize a company that is insolvent, she asked.

"Of course we should give the benefit of the doubt to CUC," she said. "But what are the consequences? Do you penalize and issue fines on a bankrupt corporation?"

Sablan objected to CUC providing free electricity for certain functions, an issue that had been raised earlier that the Georgetown Consultants said CUC needed to work on.

"There should be no free lighting," Sablan said, adding that organizers of rosaries, carnivals and other events should pay for power like other customers. "Everything should be accounted for."

Sablan ended her comments by saying she was very disappointed that CUC and Georgetown is recommending PUC waive the renewable energy standard.

"I recognized it was extremely ambitious," she said of the law that mandated CUC to obtain 10 percent of its energy from a renewable source by the end of 2008. "But I don't think we have the luxury of waiting and hoping renewable energy comes to the CNMI."

PUC

From Page 1

"I think that's just totally unreasonable," he said.

"Why are we being asked to pay for 25 years of malfeasance? It doesn't make sense to me."

Greg Cruz, president of Taotao Tano, echoed Bogdan's sentiments and said he feared rates would go up.

Ruth Tighe, who has regularly spoken about CUC's need for a plan for its future, said she disagreed with Bogdan and Cruz.

"Somebody's got to bite the bullet somewhere for 25 years of mismanagement," she said, adding that the plan outlined during the hearing seemed reasonable.

"From what I heard, it was logical. It was clear," she said.

One good thing about the increase in power rates, she mentioned during her comments, was that people were finally learning how to be energy efficient.

Rep. Victor Hocog, chairman of the House Committee on Public Utilities, Transportation and Communications, said he shared the concerns of Bogdan and Cruz, and agrees that CUC is insolvent. Hocog, a member of the Rota del-

Floor leader: I'm not working for Kilili

A lawmaker supporter of Delegate-elect Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan has issued a statement in a bid to dispel rumors that he is moving to Washington, D.C. to work for new congressional member.

House Floor Leader Joseph James Camacho said he has heard several versions of the

rumor, and wants to assure his constituents that he plans to finish his term as Precinct IV representative.

"I am not going Washington, D.C.," Camacho said. "I made a commitment to be a representative for the good people of Precinct 4 and I intend to fulfill that commitment."

Fitial nixes clipping governor's emergency powers

By AGNES E. DONATO
agnes_donato@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Gov. Benigno R. Fitial has vetoed a bill clipping the governor's powers to declare a state of disaster emergency, saying the Legislature does not have the constitutional authority to do so.

"Although...the NMI Constitution authorized the Legislature to enact legislation to add other emergencies, it does not authorize the Legislature to take away, restrict, or redefine emergencies contrary to the NMI Constitution," Fitial said in his veto message.

Under the bill, the governor will not be able to use his constitutional powers to declare an emergency to deal with "financial crisis or hardship." Proponents of the bill say such declarations should only be allowed in extreme cases such as an invasion, civil disturbance, natural disaster, or calamity. They argue that existing laws provide enough means for the governor to deal with a financial crisis without the governor having to use emergency powers.

But Fitial says that, even if lawmakers had the power to restrict emergencies, the governor's authority to declare an emergency for financial crisis-related events "should not be restricted when such restriction may affect the health and wel-

fare of the people of the Commonwealth."

He cites the case of the Commonwealth Utilities Corp., which remains under a state of emergency. "[I]f the governor cannot declare a state of emergency to avert an eventual loss of public utilities, the people of the Commonwealth will undoubtedly suffer without power and water. The governor should not approach an eventual disaster with a 'wait and see' stance, as the end result will be much more disastrous and costly to the people of the Commonwealth," he said.

He added, "I urge the Legislature to work together with the administration in finding solutions to the many crises that the Commonwealth is facing, instead of restricting the governor's power to avert or fix the disasters that are before us today."

Rep. Joseph James Camacho introduced the bill in May 2008 in the wake of the governor's emergency declaration for the Commonwealth Ports Authority, which was facing technical default on its airport revenue bonds due to financial problems.

Since Fitial assumed office in January 2006, he has issued declarations or extensions of more than a dozen disaster emergencies for government agencies.

The rumor was fueled by his officials. Since returning from the trip, however, he has been asked many times about whether he was moving to Washington.



Camacho

"With each new encounter, the tales get bigger and weirder," Camacho relates. "Some versions tell of

me traveling to D.C. a few weeks ago with...Sablan so that I could look for a house or apartment. Other versions tell of me being the chief of staff or the legal counsel for our CNMI Delegate, [and] that I will be resigning as a Representative of Precinct 4. The most warp[ed] version so far that I have heard is that I will be leaving my family and [moving] to D.C. by myself."

According to Camacho, he traveled to Washington with

Sablan because it was "a very good opportunity to meet and talk with U.S. Congress members, congressional staffers and U.S. Department and Agency personnel."

He said he has not accepted a job as chief of staff or legal counsel, or any other position, in Sablan's new office. He added that his family is intact, and he has no plans to leave Saipan without his wife and son. (Agnes E. Donato)

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

SSHS PTA meeting, mid-progress reports

To all parents and legal guardian of Saipan Southern High School: There will be a PTA meeting on Wednesday, Dec. 17, 2008, at 6pm in the cafeteria. Mid-progress reports will be issued from 4pm to 7pm. These may be picked up at the teachers' classrooms. All students will be dismissed at 1pm. (PR)

Deadline today for full-time employees' scholarship

Full-time employees have until today, Dec. 15, 2008, to submit their

application for the new scholarship offered by the CNMI Scholarship Office. The scholarship is available to private and public sector employees who want to enroll as part-time students for the Northern Marianas College's Spring 2009 semester.

Copies of the application form, the rules and regulations, and the memorandum of agreement can be downloaded by logging on to www.cnmischolarship.com, can be obtained from the CNMI Scholarship Office, or can be downloaded from NMC's website at www.nmcnet.edu. For more information and to learn about other applicable requirements, contact the CNMI Scholarship Office at 664-4750. (NMC)

PUBLIC NOTICE Attention Diabetics!

Pursuant to local and federal public health guidelines you are required to obtain an eye exam prior to December 31st of each year. Failure to do so may result in serious consequences including loss of vision and permanent blindness.

The cost of your exam is covered by medical insurance. If you are unable to pay, funding is available to cover your costs.

Report immediately to Marianas Eye Institute, Monday to Friday 8AM - 5PM or Saturday 9AM to 1PM. Marianas Eye Institute is located on Beach Road, Garapan across 13 Fishermen Monument. Tel. 235-9090. Deadline extensions available.

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GIFTS FROM THE ISLANDS

Capt. Clarence P. Tenorio shows off the package he recently received from Operation CNMI Home Front Support. The group recently mailed out more than 200 packages to military men and women stationed off-island. Local groups and residents donated the food, reading materials and other items in the packages.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Land lessee fails to pay \$245,772 in 20 years

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

An investor who leased 13,983 square meters of private land on Saipan since the late '80s has allegedly failed to pay the balance of \$245,772 for 20 years now and has abandoned the lot, forcing its owner to go to court to regain control of his property.

Juan A. Augustin asked the Superior Court to terminate his lease agreement with Sung T. Park that was entered on Nov. 1, 1988.

Augustin, through counsel

Vincent DLG. Torres, asked the court to clear the title of his land and terminate all the rights and interests Park has or may have on the lot.

Torres stated in the complaint that on Nov. 21, 1988, Augustin leased his property to Park under a 55-year lease agreement.

The lawyer said that under the agreement, Park shall pay the plaintiff \$248,772, plus \$300 monthly rental payment. The monthly rental payments were to increase by \$30 every 10th year anniversary of the lease, according to the agreement.

Torres said that, upon signing the agreement, Park gave Augustin about \$3,000 and promised to pay the balance of

\$245,772 after that.

Park, however, has not done so, Torres said—including payment of the monthly \$300—up until today, which is now more than 20 years.

In addition, the lawyer pointed out, the respondent has not developed or improved the lot since the date of the agreement.

Park abandoned the lot since the date of the agreement, Torres said.

"Respondent has never communicated with petitioner regarding the lease agreement, his rental payments or for any matter since the signing date of the agreement up until the filing date of this petition," Torres added. *(Ferdie de la Torre)*

Federal court grants Pelisamen more time to prepare, lawyer still missing

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The federal court has granted a former estate administrator's request for more time to review the evidence in the wire fraud and money laundering case that he faces along with a wanted lawyer.

U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Alex R. Munson accepted Luis Kaipat Pelisamen's waiver of his right to a speedy trial.

Munson determined that "the ends of justice would be served" by giving Pelisamen and his court-appointed counsel, Douglas Cushnie, more time to review the evidence in preparation for trial.

The judge set the jury trial for April 20, 2009, at 9am.

Munson ordered that Pelisamen be allowed to remain at liberty under all the same terms and conditions as the court had previously set.

In January 2008, the Federal Bureau of Investigation arrested Pelisamen following an indictment that charged him and attorney Joseph Aldan Arriola of stealing \$625,575 from the Rita Kaipat estate's account.

As of Friday, the FBI has yet to arrest Arriola, who had reportedly fled the CNMI.

Pelisamen used to be the administrator of the Kaipat estate. Arriola served as Pelisamen's counsel in that probate.

Then Superior Court Associate Judge Juan T. Lizama kicked out both Pelisamen and Arriola from the estate after finding that some money in the estate was missing.

According to the indictment, Arriola and Pelisamen transferred funds belonging to the Kaipat estate from the Bank of Guam to the Bank of Hawaii on Nov. 28, 2005, thereby causing communications by wire between Saipan and Hawaii.

In October 2007, police arrested Pelisamen for allegedly engaging in a sponsorship scheme in which many alien workers whose entry permits are nearing expiration were recruited for a fee.

DCCA CHILD CARE PROGRAM OPENS FOR NEW APPLICANTS (Saipan Only)

To: All parents and/or Legal Guardians

The Department of Community and Cultural Affairs will be accepting new applications for Child Care and Development Fund (Child Care Program) for the island of Saipan starting from Monday, Dec. 15 until Friday, Dec. 26, 2008 between 8:00a.m. to 4:00p.m. Mondays to Thursdays, and 8:00a.m. to 12:00p.m. Fridays.

Applications may be picked up at: DCCA Child Care Program Office
Building No. 1347 Capital Hill
Office nos. 664-2575 and 664-2573

APPLICATION FORMS ARE LIMITED

Requirements:

Applicant of Household

1. Check stubs for the most recent two pay periods for each parent or guardian
2. A copy of Identification Card for each parent or guardian (Passport, CNMI driver's license, Mayor's ID Card or entry permit)
3. A copy of your most recent 1040 Tax (each parent or guardian)
4. Residency: The applicant or guardian must be living in the CNMI
Provide one of the following documents
 - a. House Rental/ Mortgage
 - b. Utility Receipt
 - c. Telephone Receipt
 - d. Entry Permit
5. Employment verification
6. Child support statement/stub
7. Training/Education Verification and class schedules
8. If single parent/guardian in a household provide notarized affidavit

Child/Children Household member:

1. A copy of Birth Certificate for each child (Child must be a US citizen or a qualified alien, as defined in Personal Responsibility Work Opportunity Act (PRWORA))
2. A copy of US Passport
3. A copy of Social Security Card



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NOTICE OF SALE UNDER POWER OF SALE IN DEED OF TRUST

Edward M. Ayuyu, ("Trustor"), on or about September 17, 2001 gave and delivered to the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation, ("Trustee"), acting on behalf of the Department of Veterans Affairs, United States of America, ("VA"), a Deed of Trust upon certain real property hereinafter described, which Deed of Trust was recorded on September 17, 2001 under Document No. 01-1942 to secure payment of a Promissory Note of the Trustor to the Trustee, acting on behalf of the VA.

The Deed of Trust and this Notice of Sale affect the property hereafter described:

LOT NO. 345 R 426, CONTAINING AN AREA OF 929 SQUARE METERS, MORE OR LESS, AS MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED ON DRAWING/CADASTRAL PLAT NO. 345 R 09 DATED SEPTEMBER 25, 1984, COMMONWEALTH RECORDER'S FILE NO. 84-2049, THE DESCRIPTION THEREIN BEING INCORPORATED HEREIN BY REFERENCE.

The Trustor has defaulted on payment of the Note secured by the Deed of Trust, and by reason of said default Trustee issued its Notice of Default on July 20, 2006. More than thirty days have passed since the default notice was served on Trustor and said default has not been cured.

Pursuant to 2CMC §4622(b)(2), NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that, Trustee will, on **December 22, 2008 at 10:00 a.m., at the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation's Office in Garapan, Saipan, whose address is P.O. Box 500514, Saipan, MP 96951** under power of sale contained in the Deed of Trust, sell the above described parcel of real property at public auction to the highest qualified bidder, to satisfy the obligations secured by said Deed of Trust. The minimum bid offer shall be not less than **\$10,000.00**.

All bids received from outside the Commonwealth must be postmarked by December 11, 2008 and must be received no later than December 22, 2008 by 8:00 a.m. at our office in Garapan, Saipan. Off-island bidders must notify the NMHC Corporate Director in writing (by any mode of written communication including facsimile or other electronic transmission) of their intent to bid. Off-island bidders may appoint a representative to participate in the auction on their behalf.

A deposit of ten percent (10%) of the offered purchase price must be paid by the winning bidder on the bid date by 4:00 p.m. and the balance of the purchase price shall be payable by cash, certified check, cashier's check, electronic or wire transfers, within 72 hours from the time of sale.

The sale shall be without warranty as to the title or interest to be conveyed or as to the property of the Deed of Trust, other than that the Trustee is the lawful holder of such Deed of Trust.

Trustee reserves the right to reject any and all bids and to cancel or extend the date, time and place for sale of such property. Any prospective buyer must be a person authorized by the Constitution and laws of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to hold title to real property in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

DATED this 20th day of November 2008.

/s/ Joshua T. Sasamoto
Corporate Director, NMHC

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NMC names new financial officer

The Northern Marianas College named Rogelio "Roger" L. Madriaga as its new chief financial and administrative officer Friday. He will join the college today.

No stranger to the college, Madriaga had previously worked for five years at NMC, where—as the director of the Office of Planning, Budget, and CIP—he led the college's efforts in planning, evaluation,

research, assessment, and grant management. He also directed the development of the college's annual budget, including the examination of departmental budget submissions, the monitoring of revenue collections, and the preparation of operational plans for all federally funded programs.

Prior to serving as director, Madriaga had worked as NMC's associate director for the Office of Planning, Evaluation, and

Grants, and assistant director for the Office of Research, Planning and Evaluation. During his tenure at the college, he was instrumental in implementing rigorous financial controls and cost efficiencies as well as compliance with federal and CNMI and board policies. He had even been part of a working group that developed the college's first budget manual, which is still being used.

Most recently, Madriaga

worked for more than eight years at the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation as the manager of Administration and Operations. In addition to providing administrative and fiscal leadership and direction, he assisted in overseeing OVR's budgeting processes, planning activities, research and evaluation functions, human resource management, financial management, audit resolutions, and program assessment activities.

"We are extremely pleased to welcome Roger to NMC's management team," said NMC president Dr. Carmen Fernandez. "In addition to his experience as a seasoned financial manager, he brings a broad base of administrative knowledge and expertise to the college."

Madriaga graduated with a master's degree in business administration from the University of Hawaii at Manoa in 1994. Prior to his graduate studies, he earned two bachelor's degrees—one in business administration and another in social sciences—from UH Hilo.

"Roger is also highly regarded for having a deep understanding of NMC's planning, assessment, and budgeting processes," Fernandez added. "His prior work at NMC will especially come in handy as he will have to hit the ground running."

For the past three months, Martin Mendiola, program coordinator for the Rota Instructional Site, had served as acting CFAO.

"The college community is deeply thankful to Martin for capably filling this critical role for the last several weeks," Fernandez said. "His contributions have made a significant impact on the College's accreditations efforts." (NMC)

Halaby tops 2009 cover model search



Five of the six finalists pose for the camera during awarding ceremonies for the search for Beach Road Magazine 2009 Cover Model. From left are Yvette Marie Deleon Guerrero Bennett (2nd runner-up), Melissa R. Halaby (1st place), Cloven Rose Luna (1st runner-up), May M. Manuel and Leia St. Clair. NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.

By NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.
n_rodriguez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Melissa R. Halaby topped five other aspirants in the first ever search for *Beach Road Magazine's* 2009 cover girl model.

The monthly magazine's top executives announced the results of the model search during a simple ceremony yesterday.

Halaby garnered an average of 19.67 scores from the three judges that included Reina Camacho of the Division of Environmental Quality, photographer Hideo Honda and

award-winning stylist Renren Santos.

The other finalists were Cloven Rose Luna (first runner-up), Yvette Marie Deleon Guerrero Bennett (second runner-up), Leia St. Clair, May Manuel and Alma S. Manlulu.

Manlulu was the only finalist who did not show up.

Halaby is currently a commercial model for Cocoa Cola and Vitamin Water Drink.

She said her favorite sport is volleyball and played for the Saipan International School varsity in her high school year.

Halaby said she is extremely excited about topping the search.

"Modeling is something that I've always want to do. It's really a good idea for me to join," she said.

To become a model, she said "you must have a lot of confidence in yourself."

The awarding ceremony was led by Glimpses of Guam executive vice president Stella Fong, BRM operations manager Virgie Avendano-Woodruff and account manager Susan Marchitti.

Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

December 15, 1998

Holiday trips surge

The Northern Marianas will see an increase in the number of visitor arrivals from Japan this holiday season as Japan Airlines began its promotional campaign to help save the sagging tourism industry. This early, all JAL regular flights from December 23 to January 10 are already fully booked as Japanese escape the harsh winter season and spend the holidays on the island. Likewise, its four remaining chartered flights from Nagoya to Saipan using a Boeing 767 aircraft are already assured of full capacity. Two earlier flights arrived on December 4 and 11.

Panel considers \$80M nonrated bond

The government is considering issuing \$75 million to \$80 million worth of nonrated bonds to raise cash to match Capital Improvement Projects funds, Commonwealth Development Authority Chairman Juan S. Tenorio said yesterday. He said the Revitalization Task Force, of which CDA is a member, made the decision in a last-ditch effort to source out an estimated \$85 million in federal grants that have not been tapped since 1995. "Right now, we have no choice. It's important to borrow money," Tenorio said. Use of federal funds decreased greatly in the past three years out of a combination of the former governor's reluctance to tap them and the lack of matching funds to draw them out.

December 15, 1999

Nielsen's resignation sought

Visibly irked over refusal to reimburse expenditures incurred from community contributions, Rep. Melvin O. Faisao yesterday called on Finance Sec. Lucy DLG Nielsen to step down if she doesn't see it fit to comply with provisions of the law. "If she wants it her own way, resign and run for [Legislature] so she can define the meaning of 'public purpose'," he said during a House session. Mr. Faisao's complaints stemmed from alleged refusal by the Department of Finance to pay about \$290 in tent rentals charged by the representative to his legislative account. Ms. Nielsen could not be reached for comment on his allegations.

James Manglona: 'I did it to keep my job'

Thirty-three-year-old James King Manglona, also known as Jose Hofschneider, merely wanted to keep his job so that he can feed his family. A high school dropout without any special skill, he was lucky to land a job in the Legislature earning \$35,000 a year as aide of former Sen. Herman M. Manglona. Unfortunately, his desire to give his four children—three boys and a girl—a comfortable life and a better future now remains uncertain. U.S. District Court Judge Alex R. Munson yesterday sentenced him to six months imprisonment for attempting to corrupt or influence a grand juror into voting against the indictment of Mr. Manglona. According to U.S. Attorney Kevin Seely, James approached a grand juror last Aug. 25 and asked her to disclose information in connection with any investigation on Mr. Manglona, who was then facing bribery charges committed when he was mayor of Tinian. James also tried to convince the grand juror to vote "no" to the indictment as well as persuade other grand jurors to do the same. He promised to pay the grand juror in exchange for the favor.

December 15, 2000

Jury finds Repeki guilty of murder

Jurors decided in favor of the prosecution yesterday when they found Eugene Repeki, Jr. guilty of murder in the second degree in connection with the brutal killing of a 40-year-old security guard last May 4, 1999. Mr. Repeki, 21, is only one of three suspects facing trial for the manslaughter and aggravated assault of Filipino worker Cesar B. Valerio. His alleged co-conspirators, Anthony Magofna and Thomas Basa, stand to undergo the same trial next year.

OPA wants MHS principal probed

Public Auditor Leo L. LaMotte is asking the Public School System to immediately look into the possible involvement of Marianas High School Principal James Denight in the alleged irregularities on the purchase of supplies and services using a special trust fund. LaMotte also urged the PSS to seriously consider the enforcement of employment sanctions against the custodian of the MHS Food Court, a locally-established food service program, for violating the ethics provision of the System's procurement rules.

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Pacific

50,000-plus residents escape large waves in parts of PNG

PORTMORESBY, Papua New Guinea (PNG Post-Courier)—The disaster caused by severe sea swells which hit the east coast of New Ireland, outer islands of Bougainville, Manus and parts of East Sepik, is spreading.

Martin Mose, the director of the National Disaster Office, confirmed yesterday that the number of people displaced had risen to 50,000. The number could be higher as reports from

other provinces have not yet reached them.

Mose said the confirmed reported numbers of people displaced were 20,000 in New Ireland, 20,000 in the 24 outer islands in Manus, and 5,500 in the Bougainville Atoll communities of Mortlock, Carterets, Tasman.

"The latest to be added to the list of devastated as of 2pm yesterday was Morobe Province with houses in Wasu, Sialum

and Siassi completely washed away," Mose said.

He said affected villages were Kiari (7 houses), Malasanga (46 houses), Wasu Station (6 houses) from the Wasu LLG, Gitua (5 houses) and six houses from Boru hamlet. In Siassi's Kampalap village (15 houses), Sakar Island (10 houses), Tolokiva Island (10 houses) and Masele village, only 12 houses remain. He said this left 245 families homeless.

Tonga wins \$1.8M for political reforms

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (RNZI/PIR)—Australia has given Tonga more than one million U.S. dollars as a reward for achieving a set of economic and public sector reforms.

Tonga's Prime Minister, Dr Fred Sevele thanked Australia after the money was transferred to the government

as part of the Tonga-Australia Performance Partnership Agreement.

The TAPPA was signed in August 2007 and is designed to encourage Tonga to implement a program of essential reforms.

A statement from the Tongan government said the first mile-

stones focused on improvements to budget processes and tax administration.

If Tonga reaches a second set of milestones, which build on the first but focus on a more strategic approach to spending, it will receive around one point four million US dollars as part of the program.

American Samoa elects woman as senator

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (RNZI/PIR)—A woman has been chosen as senator in American Samoa's Pago Pago village district, replacing a retired judge, who had served the district for the last eight years.

While members of the House of Representatives are elected by voters from their respective districts, members of the Senate are chosen by their districts following traditional meetings of chiefs. One of the major qualification for

a Senator is that the person must hold a ranking chiefly title.

The Pago Pago district selected Asuega Fa'amamata, one of the territory's few female chiefs, as its new senator to replace Tu-aolo Fruean.



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- Gates Millennium Scholarship
- CNMI Scholarship
- SHEFA Scholarship
- And MORE!

Financial aid experts will walk participants through filling out application forms and answer any questions about finding money for college. Participants who attend the FREE Financial Aid Workshop will also receive:

- A fee waiver for NMC application and placement test fees for the Spring 2009 semester!
- Up to 200 Meal vouchers will be distributed for the Thursday Night Street Market!

The FREE Financial Aid Workshop will be held on December 18, 2008 at the Hibiscus Hall, Fiesta Resort from 5pm to 7pm

This advertisement is paid for with federal funds made possible by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, College Access Challenge Grant Program.



Opinion

Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

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MEMBER

AP The Associated Press

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EDITORIAL

Which way on education?

Education was relegated to the outskirts of the presidential campaign this year, always a fourth or fifth runner-up to such pressing matters as the economy, Iraq and health care. With few people asking penetrating questions on the issue, Barack Obama was able to sound as though he sided both with traditionalist teachers unions and with accountability-minded reformers.

Now that it's time to name an Education secretary, no one is sure in which direction he's headed. Stanford University professor Linda Darling-Hammond, who was named to Obama's education transition team, is one of the most-mentioned candidates. As a severe critic of the No Child Left Behind Act and an opponent of merit pay for teachers, she is favored by teachers unions. The accountability camp prefers names such as New York schools Chancellor Joel Klein, who has spearheaded large-scale reforms in the nation's largest school district. One side says that what students need are major improvements in health and social services, as well as drastic increases in school funding. The other says that schools wrongly lay the blame for students' low achievement on poverty instead of on lackluster teaching and low expectations.

Both are right. Schools are short the money needed to turn barely literate teenagers into employable young adults, and No Child Left Behind is riddled with faults. It unfairly punishes many schools and has had the effect of narrowing curricula. Yet greater accountability also has led to significant improvements, and new infusions of cash must be contingent on evidence that they result in stronger achievement. Higher pay for teachers? Absolutely—as long as it's tied to merit pay and an end to tenure.

It would be a shame for the reform movement to lose momentum at this point. For all of its weaknesses, the federal accountability law has pushed schools into higher gear. For more than a decade, this country's students ranked in the middle among industrialized nations in math. In the most recent round of testing, they were in the top third, the result of focused math instruction backed up by regular testing. In addition, Darling-Hammond's early attacks on Teach for America, a non-profit organization that recruits some of the brightest college graduates into the teaching profession, give us little confidence that she would support innovative approaches to education.

At the same time, reformers must be open to how badly No Child Left Behind itself needs reform. After years of public battering, schools need a leader who is less an ideologue than a pragmatist, who puts children ahead of both union and political priorities.

(c) 2008, Los Angeles Times



Hope for the future of the CNMI

With all the negative and depressing reports being thrown at us recently, I can only repeat my theme song: "Developing our human resources must become a national priority regardless of costs if we are to become economically strong."

Here is a quote from Lee Kuan Yew, the former Prime Minister of Singapore:

"Singapore's success is due to the ability and industry of our young people, willing and eager to learn, prepared to work hard and pay their way in the world, finding pride and pleasure in constructive endeavor.... There is no law in nature which provides that life will get better next year. We have to work to make it better."

The one question that pops up whenever we read the history of successful countries is the high development of their human capital. Each country devoted tremendous energy to creating an intelligent work force. It created incentives for its youth to study and become professionals needed to work the industries that propel a nation into economic stability.

These successful countries also trained skillful tradesmen. Those that didn't want to become professionals turned to trades schools so that the industries would have trained workers to operate them intelligently. Working with strategic plans and goals, its well educated workforce ventured into creating opportunities that created jobs and wealth. In summary, both categories of workers are drastically needed if we are to become economically successful.

What is our attitude toward the statements above? Do we accept the fact that only our citizens can build a sustainable strong country? When will we understand that we must become less dependent on nonresident workers? Will our youth ever become entrepreneurs in our own land? What is the most important thing we must do to recapture the vitality needed to become prosperous again?

To point out several glaring sad examples in our system. The CUC has just been awarded \$3.8 million to repair several of the engines. That is good. But who within CUC can do the repair work? Will we have to go outside for help? How many electrical engineers are employed at CUC? How many of the employees are trained certified electricians, fully knowledgeable of generators? Will the repairs be repaired by the same people who allowed the engines to fall into disrepair?

How many economists are employed by the government to do constant research and monitor our economy? Is there a schooled hydrologist employed in the water department? How many of our present government agencies have a degree or advanced study in the position they have been placed in? What studies do any of the above do daily, weekly, monthly to improve their ability to lead? If I am incorrect on the above, please quickly set me straight. I don't want to go around spreading untruths.

When I see businesses closing down on Saipan, I am saddened that it is happening. But on the other hand I see this as an opportunity for us residents. Most of these businesses are owned and operated by foreign investors. As they leave we must step in firmly and conduct our own small businesses. This is a prime time for us to

By ANTHONY PELLEGRINO

Special to the Saipan Tribune

Pellegrino is a longtime businessman in the CNMI and is the former president of the Saipan Chamber of Commerce.



become entrepreneurs. It doesn't take a lot of money. But it takes a lot of desire and determination.

It is time we see the acres of diamonds under our feet. It is time we step forward and take risks to create and control our own destiny. We have successfully escaped the yoke of foreign political occupation, but we have substituted that yoke for one of economic domination by outsiders. Except for a handful of venturesome residents, the majority of us have opted to join the government workforce, or not work at all, thereby creating a vacuum for foreign investors to fill. As result a horde of our potentially skilled workforce lie idle, just waiting for the next food stamps. Sad!

During this period of flux, we must evaluate the course we have traveled from. Based on a review of the past, let us take positive steps to develop our human capital which will then surely result in economic power. Consider all the money the U.S government gives us each year. If some of it were to be used to develop our human resources based on definite goals, the results in a short time would be astounding.

Here is another quote from Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore which requires leadership translated into motivation and determination:

"Given the human attributes of a given population and the training skills, knowledge, education, and discipline of a people, it is left to the 1 or 2 percent of the population who are in positions of leadership to make the population give its best."

While you ponder on the above, let me relate a parable. Every night when a father came home from work, his children would run and jump into his arms and ask: "Daddy, please play with us?" And almost every night the man would play with his children, sharing games, books and toys.

One night, however the father was unusually tired. So instead of playing with his children, he sat down and began to read his newspaper. His children rushed to him with the same question: "Daddy, will you play with us tonight?" When the daddy told them that he was too tired, they persisted. Finally, the father thought of something to keep them busy while he rested. The father tore out a whole page out of his newspaper. Printed on the page was a map of the whole world.

The father took the scissors and cut the map into many small pieces. Then he said to his children: "Here is a puzzle of the map of the world. Why don't you go and put the puzzle together?" The father thought that this would keep the children occupied for a long time,

See HOPE on Next Page

EDITORIAL POLICY

The *Saipan Tribune* welcomes comments on any article, column, editorial, or topic that may be of interest to the public. Letters to the editor must include the name, address, and contact number of the contributor. Letters that are critical in nature should focus on issues, not personalities. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, CIC Centre, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

From Japan, lessons for Obama's infrastructure plans

President-elect Barack Obama put forward a plan this week for the largest government infrastructure project in a half-century. The idea is to revive the economy and create jobs for America's unemployed. But huge public works projects often fail to revive national economies. Consider the example of Japan in the 1990s.

The situation in Japan then was similar in some ways to that in the United States today. A dramatic market crash and a plunge in real estate prices shook what had been a confident nation. Japan turned inward; economists talked earnestly about paradigm shifts. The obsession with exporting no longer seemed to be serving the country well. Leaders cast aside their previous concerns about budget deficits. The then-Ministry of International Trade and Industry sorrowfully let it be known that there were "areas in which Japan lags behind major developed nations."

One such area was infrastructure — even though Japan is so often rocked by earthquakes that it tends to operate in Katrina mode: always fortifying for a meteorological or geological crisis. The central and local governments began spending billions of yen on construction. In short, Japan traded its export complex for an edifice complex.

The projects were similar to some infrastructure plans under discussion here today. Bridges? Japan put up the longest suspension bridge in the world. Airports? Kansai International, yes, on an artificial island, but also local fields such as Ibaraki Airport near Mito. Roads? Japan built new streets and highways, including the famous New Tomei Expressway. For biotech and telecommunications, Japan poured out the subsidies.

When one plan proved insufficient, another was begun. In 1999, Japan announced a scheme to create 700,000 jobs, much as Obama recently announced a plan to create or save 2.5 million

jobs. As with the U.S. example, politicians were precise about the number of new jobs ... and less precise about their cost. Between 1992 and 2000, the Japanese launched 10 stimulus packages that included public works. The Land of the Rising Sun became the Construction State. Other worthy issues, such as consistent tax reform, lagged. In fact, fiscal reform overall was postponed. After the 1995 Kobe earthquake claimed thousands of lives, the focus on infrastructure was reinforced.

Some of these projects were valuable, some risible. As Bloomberg News recently reported, Japan Airlines Corp. and All Nippon Airways, which run nearly all flights within Japan, don't even expect to fly to the Ibaraki Airport. With the Japanese turning to trains, the New Tomei Expressway seemed a waste.

The spending yielded painfully little for the rest of the economy. The Nikkei stayed down. The country's standard of living failed to keep pace with the rest of the world's. The average Japanese's purchasing power had been moving closer to that of the average American, Ronald Utt of the Heritage Foundation has noted. But in the 1990s the Japanese saw few advances. The gap between America and Japan widened again.

"The construction state is in some respects akin to the military-industrial complex in cold-war America (or the Soviet Union), sucking in the country's wealth, consuming it inefficiently, growing like a cancer and bequeathing both fiscal crisis and environmental devastation," commented Gavan McCormack, a professor at the Australian National University. The stimulus plans had the opposite effect of what was expected. Appalled at the country's new deficits, Japanese consumers closed their wallets.

Worst, though, was the failure on jobs. Unemployment fell in many nations in the 1990s. In Japan, the '90s were a lost decade:

Chechnya. And we pray, in spite of the evidence, that the White House did not countenance the use of torture in its counterterrorism measures, let alone, order the practice from the Oval Office!

It is ironic that in some quarters, the insistence on human rights is viewed as the source of many of the world's current evils (from UK's *NewStatesman*). I would dismiss this as propaganda except that I heard it expressed locally by a prominent long-term Saipan resident Hongkong-Guangzhou-originating Chinese businessman who decried any insinuation that the garment industry, the CNMI and China, violated workers' human rights. Besides, he seriously added, how about the human rights of the industry's owners and administrators?

Of course, any attempt to document violations of human rights in these western Pacific islands is perceived as an intrusion into indigenous rights. Our former lady teacher in Rota who felt compelled to flee the islands due to threats on her family and her person just because she pointed to such violations in the early 90s has since become a *persona non grata* in some powerful quarters on Saipan. A tandem couple, law practitioners who helped me understand the legal situation of labor and immigration in the Commonwealth early on, left for fear of their family's safety and wellbeing. The few politicians who are seen in the same room with human rights' advocates are instantly vilified for betraying the cause of those who elected them into office.

My sixth grade students have been watching scenes of wildlife behavior among animals and plants as part of their Science curriculum, and what is evident in the food chain is the unmistakable vulnerability of the weak against the survival instinct of the strong. That seems to be Mother Nature's way. But in scientific classification, we are called *homo sapiens* for our alleged natural capacity to learn from experience, for a faculty of reason. In that sense, our progeny in the mammalian class stand a vertebral head above everyone's shoulder.

Lead that to the study of Ancient Civilization and one can discern two opposing yet simultaneously operating forces—the law of brute force and Empire, and the rule of law and the civilizing process. One can trace the adherence to the rule of law from Hammurabi, Moses and Cyrus in Mesopotamia, to the English, American and French Bill of Rights of the last two centuries. But the trail on brute force, sanctified in religious sacrifices and divine dictums, polished in the technological innovation of the chariot to today's weapons of mass destruction, rationalized in the defense posture of Mycena and Sparta to the marching cadence of Caesars and the Roman

By AMITY SHLAES

Special to The Washington Post

Amity Shlaes, a senior fellow in economic history at the Council on Foreign Relations, is the author of The Forgotten Man, a history of the 1930s.



The unemployment rate more than doubled and surpassed the U.S. rate — an unthinkable occurrence just a few years earlier.

Even today, Japan is having trouble climbing out of its cement pit. At its high, in the mid-1990s, infrastructure spending accounted for 6 percent of its gross domestic product, double what the United States allocated for infrastructure in the '90s and still higher than what politicians are considering spending today. In estimates of national debt, the world's second-largest national economy is near the top of the list, perched between Lebanon and Jamaica. Last year, Japan's public debt was far greater than the size of its economy, a burden that makes its demographic challenges more difficult to address.

What lessons should the United States take away? It is wrong to assume that construction will guarantee a two-fer for the economy — shining structures and redemptive growth. The private sector is often better than politicians at guessing what the market needs. And infrastructure projects demand so much political energy that there's too little energy left over for everything else. Congress might want to remember all this as it debates infrastructure funding in the coming months. An edifice complex seems more likely to petrify a country than to move it forward.

Letter to the Editor

UDHR and the Lord of the Flies

Ruth Tighe castigates herself for failing to commemorate Constitution Day in light of her annual reminder that the Commonwealth seemed to have forgotten the significance of the day.

I plead ditto for failing to mark the 60th year anniversary of the UN's Universal Declaration on Human Rights last week. I intended to attend the scheduled Mass at the Chalan Kanoa Cathedral if only to lend support to an understanding that the United States fostered and Eleanor Roosevelt so persistently promoted 60 years ago, but priorities shifted by the end of the day.

The eloquent simplicity of the Declaration's language makes its civilizing intent unmistakable, and has made it the most translated document in the world. It begins and lays out a fundamental structure of establishing human relations, and the universal measure to gauge the conduct of the individual and society.

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts, which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law, ...

It was meant to be an antidote to the vagaries of war and the periodic emergence of Hitlers in the world. Sixty years later, certain characters have become familiar around the dining table: Pol Pot of Cambodia and Pinochet of Chile, Milosevic of Serbia and Marcos of the Philippines, the Korean father-son duo and the Talibans of Afghanistan, to name a few. We have become inured to human rights violations that we readily dismiss out of our consciousness the reminders that groups like Falun Dafa foist on us during Saipan's Thursday street market. Tibet and Myanmar are places elsewhere, and we do not see ourselves in Darfur or Rwanda, Palestine and

Empire to the apocalyptic maneuvers of the architects of the War on Terror on Pennsylvania Avenue, and we begin to understanding how the 50-some unanimous infant voices of the United Nations (well, the USSR and South Africa understandably did not oppose but abstained) 60 years ago was but a feeble cry in the din of humankind's inhumanity to its kind. Vigilance in this instance, is undeniably a supreme virtue.

British writer Sir William Golding would allegorize such opposing forces in his novel, *The Lord of the Flies*, the title being a direct reference to Mesopotamia's Beelzebub of satanic pedigree. My class got to view the '90s film version of the novel about a group of young American military cadets stranded after a plane crash in one of the Caribbean islands. What stood out was the choice in any given crisis of reverting to our basic animal and survival instincts, or on our consciousness of self-directed limits and possibilities of law and order, manners and etiquette.

Greek Nikos Kazantzakis elevated that telling in his celebrated Homeric *Warriors of God*, where he used the metaphor of a crimson line ascending in the evolutionary trail of human consciousness while an equal force of descent occurs as well. But our sixth graders know that: Luke Skywalker always contends with Darth Vader!

The incidence of bullies and cowed "weaklings" is not foreign to classrooms. Nor is defiance and rebellion, or simply the impulse to destroy, too advanced for my 11-13 year olds. And hardly are the boys to be excused for their machismoic treatment of girls, just because there is a prevailing cultural inequity in gender treatment. If my class is a microcosm of society, then the battle between the rule of the jungle and the rule of civilization persists as an endless conflict in every social unit, down to each individual, on the planet Earth.

As to Ruth Tighe's failure to wave her CNMI flag on Constitution Day, we shall forgive her for us long as she keeps reminding us to check on the Congressional Record, and to alert us on provisions of the law pertinent to our social situation.

And in this Christian Advent season, and vaguely a season of Hope in Gaia with a possible establishment of a U.S. Department of Peace to oversee State, Defense and Homeland Security, might I be forgiven my failure to pause to beat the drums of the UDHR birthday if I continue to pursue *the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want* one sixth grader, one classroom day at a time?

Jaime Vergara

via e-mail

HOPE

From Page 10

but in a few minutes they were back.

The father was amazed. He asked, "You finished the puzzle already? How did you put it together so quickly?" The little girl replied: "It was easy." And her brother added: "On the back of the world

was a picture of a person. We just put the person together, and the world fell right into place!"

Life is all about people. The world is only what we perceive it to be. It becomes better or worse in the manner we occupy it. Saipan, Tinian and Rota are our homes. God has given them to us to do what we will. Here is a favorite story of mine that illustrates what I mean.

One day a preacher was driving along the vari-

ous farms of his district. He spotted one farm unusually well tended and laid out. The trees were heavy with fruits and the field sprouted many crops ready for harvest. The fences were neatly painted. The livestock appeared fat and well.

The preacher stopped his car and walked over to the farmer hard at work in the field. After greeting him, the preacher remarked: "God has been good to you to give you such a beautiful and bountiful

farm. You have been blessed."






The farmer smiled and replied: "Preacher, you are correct that God gave me this farm to tend, but you should have seen what it looked like when He gave it to me!"

I wish you all a joyous holiday season. May God bring us peace, and may Santa bring us the things that make our children's hearts sing with joy. Merry Christmas to all!

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam Homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
				
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 15 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated morning showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated morning showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated morning showers.
▲88° ▼77°	▲88° ▼77°	▲88° ▼77°	▲88° ▼77°	▲88° ▼77°

Micronesia

Guam and Rota	Showers	▲84 ▼76
Palau	Partly Sunny	▲88 ▼77
Yap	Mostly Sunny	▲87 ▼76
Chuuk	Raiin	▲88 ▼78
Pohnpei	Showers	▲86 ▼76
Kosrae	Partly Sunny	▲89 ▼78
Majuro	Showers	▲83 ▼75

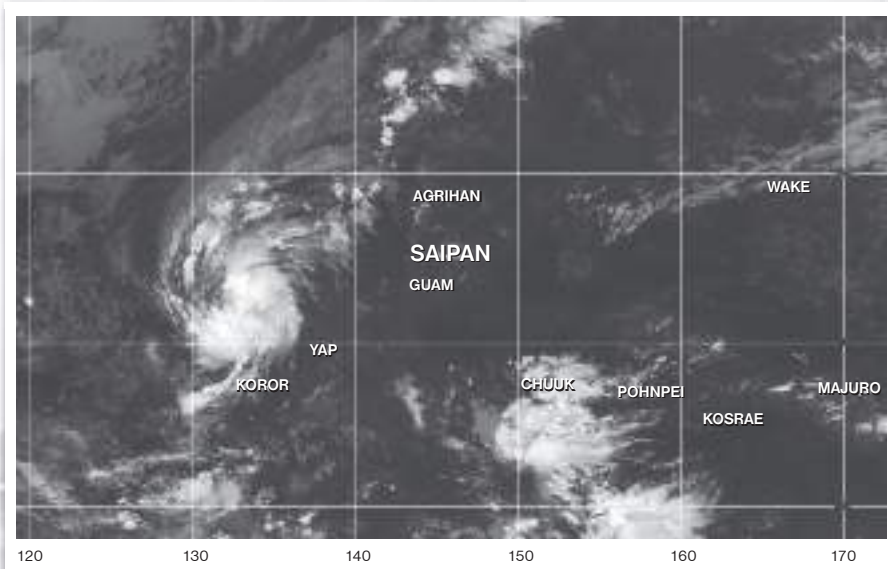
Around The Globe

Auckland	Cloudy	▲72 ▼63
Beijing	Sunny	▲42 ▼17
Hong Kong	Sunny	▲73 ▼64
Honolulu	Cloudy	▲80 ▼70
London	Partly Sunny	▲41 ▼37
Los Angeles	Mostly Cloudy	▲59 ▼48
Manila	Cloudy	▲85 ▼73
Melbourne	Mostly Cloudy	▲68 ▼54
Miami	Partly Sunny	▲77 ▼66
New York	Partly Sunny	▲51 ▼42
Osaka	Mostly Sunny	▲54 ▼36
Paris	Cloudy	▲40 ▼32
Pusan	Sunny	▲52 ▼35
Rome	Rain	▲52 ▼41
Salem	Cold	▲30 ▼24
San Francisco	Mostly CLOUDy	▲51 ▼44
Seoul	Cloudy	▲46 ▼12
Tokyo	Cloudy	▲54 ▼41
Washington, DC	Partly Sunny	▲60 ▼43

Tides

Saipan Harbor		
3:21AM Today	Low Tide:	0.9 Feet
10:40AM Today	High Tide:	2.1 Feet
3:56PM Today	Low Tide:	1.4 Feet
8:32PM Today	High Tide:	2.1 Feet

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:30AM, SUNDAY, DEC. 14, 2008

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Tropical Storm 27W (Dolphin) is located near 14N134E or about 710 miles west of Guam and moving west at 13 mph with maximum sustained winds of 65 mph. Numerous showers and scattered thunderstorms are occurring between 9N and 17N from 133E to 137E near the storm center and within the feeder bands converging into the storm. For more detailed information, see NWS advisories issued under WMO header WTPQ31 PGUM and JTWC bulletins issued under WMO header WTPN31 PGTW. A diffuse convergence boundary runs from northeast of 25N160E to 18N147E. Extensive middle level and high clouds are located southeast of the boundary. This feature runs from northeast of Wake Island to just east of Saipan. Scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms are found in convergent westerly winds around Tropical Storm Dolphin within 50 miles of a line running from EQ134E to 2N132E. These showers and thunderstorms are south of Palau. A surface trough running from EQ153E to 9N154E is producing scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms within 175 miles of the trough axis between Chuuk and Pohnpei and southward.

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:35AM	5:49 PM
Tuesday	6:36AM	5:50 PM
Wednesday	6:36AM	5:50 PM
Thursday	6:37AM	5:50 PM
Friday	6:37AM	5:51 PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	8:37PM	8:57 AM
Tuesday	9:39PM	9:48 AM
Wednesday	10:36PM	10:34 AM
Thursday	11:30PM	11:15 AM
Friday		11:53 AM

GET YOUR PICTURES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS PUBLISHED—FOR FREE

The *Saipan Tribune* accepts for FREE publication the following:

PICTURES

- ISLAND SNAPSHOTS
Birthdays, baptisms, christenings, family gatherings, reunions, club activities, and other community-related events.
- BIRTHDAY GREETINGS
A way for families and friends to greet their loved ones, accompanied by a picture of the person celebrating his/her birthday.
- BUSINESS
Corporate donations, volunteer work, promotions, granting of awards, team-building exercises, meetings and other activities by members of the business community.
- SAMU'T SARI
Pictures from the islands' Filipino community, primarily focusing on Filipino activities, gatherings, get-togethers, volunteer work, etc.
- TRAVELOGUE
Pictures of off-island travels. Contributors may submit up to 10 pictures for consideration.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Announcements of upcoming activities of organizations, community clubs, government agencies, and private companies.

CAMPUS BULLETIN

Announcements of upcoming activities in public and private schools, as well as calendar of activities. May include PTSA meetings, enrollment procedures.

REQUIREMENTS

For pictures:

- Photos should be original and not copyrighted. Contributors must have the right to allow the *Saipan Tribune* to publish the pictures.
- Digital pictures should be high-resolution (minimum of 800kb).
- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and phone number.
- Photos must have been taken in the last two months.
- For birthday greetings, must be submitted no later than 12 noon of the previous day to make it to next day's edition.

For announcements:

- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when),

the name of contact person, and a phone number.

- Must be submitted no later than 12 noon to make it to next day's edition.

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- Drop off: 2nd Floor, CIC Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan
To check if contributions are received, call (670) 235-6397, 235-2440, 235-8747

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- The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to accept or reject a contribution for publication; the right to edit all contributions, the date of publication, size of the picture, and page placement; and the right to publish contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats.
- The *Saipan Tribune* will decide how often community announcements are going to be published.
- For Travelogue, the *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to choose which pictures to publish.

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ADVERTISING For inquiries contact (670) 235-2769. E-mail: sales@saipantribune.com

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF NOVEMBER 19, 2008

DEPARTURES	ARRIVALS
Saipan-Rota CO9597 11:50am 12:25pm 1,7	Rota-Saipan CO 9598 3:25am 4:00am 5,6
Saipan-Guam CO9317 5:00am 5:50am Daily CO9313 8:30am 9:20am Daily CO9597 11:50am 1:20pm 1,7 via Rota CO9601 12:30pm 1:20pm 2,3,4,5,6 CO9603 3:30pm 4:20pm Daily CO9605 6:30pm 7:20pm Daily CO9599 9:30pm 10:20pm Daily	Guam-Saipan CO 9316 2:30am 3:20am 1,2,3,4,7 CO9598 2:30am 4:00am 5,6 via Rota CO9596 7:00am 7:50am Daily CO9600 10:20am 11:10am Daily CO9602 2:00pm 2:50pm Daily CO9604 5:00pm 5:50pm Daily CO9606 8:00pm 8:50pm Daily
Saipan-Narita NW 099 5:00am 7:40am Daily NW 078 8:25am 1:30pm 2,3,4,5,6,7 NW 075 4:55pm 7:30pm Daily	Narita-Saipan NW 076 10:15am 2:40pm Daily NW 077 6:25pm 1:25am+1 2,3,4,5,6,7 NW 100 8:45pm 1:15am+1 Daily
Saipan-Osaka NW 083 4:30pm 7:20pm Daily	Osaka-Saipan NW 084 10:40am 3:10pm Daily
Saipan-Nagoya NW 078 8:25am 11:05am Daily	Nagoya-Saipan NW 077 9:00pm 1:25am+1 Daily
Saipan-Incheon OZ 604 2:10am 6:00am 1 OZ 604 2:40am 6:30am 2,3,4,5,6,7 OZ 606 3:20pm 7:00pm Daily	Incheon-Saipan OZ 605 9:00am 2:20pm Daily OZ 603 7:40pm 1:00am+1 7 OZ 603 8:10pm 1:30am+1 1,2,3,4,5,6
Saipan-Busan OZ 608 3:50am 7:20am 1,4,5,7	Busan-Saipan OZ 607 9:30pm 2:40am+1 3,4,6,7
Saipan-Shanghai FM 844 2:50am 5:40am 2,6	Shanghai-Saipan FM 843 7:15pm 1:50am+1 1,5
Rota-Guam CO 9597 12:50pm 1:20pm 1,7	Guam-Rota CO 9598 2:30am 3:00am 5,6
Guam-Manila CO 893 5:50pm 9:10pm 3,5 via Koror CO 933 8:00pm 9:40pm Daily PR 111 6:00am 7:50am 1,2,4,6,7	Manila-Guam CO 892 10:10pm 5:30am+1 3,5 via Koror CO 934 11:10pm 4:40am+1 Daily PR 110 10:10pm 4:00am+1 1,3,5,6,7
Editor's Note: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); CO: Continental; FM: Shanghai Airlines; PR: Philippine Airlines; NW: Northwest; OZ: Asiana ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)	

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency	Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
Guam-Rota				FRE 113	11:40am	11:50am	Daily
FRE 100 7:00am 7:30am Daily				FRE 115	1:00pm	1:10pm	Daily
Rota-Saipan				FRE 117	2:30pm	2:40pm	Daily
FRE 100 7:50am 8:20am Daily				FRE 119	4:00pm	4:10pm	Daily
Saipan-Rota				FRE 121	4:40pm	4:50pm	Daily
FRE 200 9:00am 9:30am Daily				FRE 123 *	5:40pm	5:50pm	Daily
Rota-Guam				FRE 125 *	6:00pm	6:10pm	Daily
FRE 200 9:50am 10:15am Daily				Tinian-Saipan w/ connecting flights to Rota or Guam**			
Guam-Rota				FRE 102	7:05am	7:15am	Daily
FRE 300 4:00pm 4:30pm Daily				FRE 104	7:50am	8:00am	Daily
Rota-Saipan				FRE 106**	8:20am	8:30am	Daily
FRE 300 4:50pm 5:25pm Daily				FRE 108**	9:00am	9:10am	Daily
Saipan-Rota				FRE 110	10:00am	10:10am	Daily
FRE 400 6:00pm 6:30pm Daily				FRE 112	11:05am	11:15am	Daily
Rota-Guam				FRE 114	12:00pm	12:10pm	Daily
FRE 400 6:45pm 7:15pm Daily				FRE 116	1:30pm	1:40pm	Daily
Saipan-Tinian				FRE 118	2:50pm	3:00pm	Daily
FRE 101 6:45am 6:55am Daily				FRE 120**	4:20pm	4:30pm	Daily
FRE 103 7:30am 7:40am Daily				FRE 122**	5:00pm	5:10pm	Daily
FRE 105 8:00am 8:10am Daily				FRE 124	6:05pm	6:15pm	Daily
FRE 107 8:40am 8:50am Daily				FRE 126	6:20pm	6:30pm	Daily
FRE 109* 9:10am 9:20am Daily							
FRE 111* 10:45am 10:55am Daily							



NMI CRIME STOPPERS

Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:

- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any PTI cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.com

Letters to the Editor

Unity March core group speaks out

People have been asking what happened to the core group or organizers of the Unity March that was held last Dec. 7, 2007.

We can hear people say that nothing really good happened. Please be reminded that this rally was organized to primarily request DOLI to repeal Public Law 15-108. Yes, it was not repealed yet the Department of Labor listened to some of our messages and requests. There were some amendments done. Labor has opened its doors to us to discuss critical issues affecting guest workers and the declining economy of the CNMI.

The group has been working diligently, carefully and quietly for sometime now. And it is not the group's style to publish all our actions, efforts and plans unless we have our end products.

There were several discussions and meetings our group had attended. And with all these we got some beneficial results for guest workers. The implementation of P.L. 15-108 is more lenient now. Transfers have been allowed and extensions to look for employment after expiration of contract can be extended as long as you report to Labor. Of course, some transfers were not granted because the prospective employer should show that the person's employment is really necessary and Labor has to determine if the prospective employer has the capacity to pay the salary.

Our group believes that to be able to work and live here, we should have a stable economy first. What's the use of having a two-year working permit or residency if no job is available on island? We worked in a way or two with the Saipan Chamber of Commerce in our quest for a visa waiver for our vital tourists in the CNMI, like the Koreans, Chinese and Russians. As we know, Koreans can now freely visit the CNMI even if federalization kicks in. And we are still working with different government agencies to request once again to include Chinese and Russians. And we are hoping that they will

give some considerations because the economy of the CNMI is the one at stake here, which will consequently affect jobs in the CNMI and its workforce, whether you are a local or foreign worker.

We are still firm in our stand that long-term guest workers should be given the privilege to work and live here like any other U.S. citizens.

There is a new group requesting a grant of residency for guest workers who have been here in the CNMI for 20 years or more.

We are still firm in our stand that long-term guest workers should be given the privilege to work and live here like any other U.S. citizens.

How many alien workers have actually lived here for 20 years or more? Had our group known that this new group will bargain for 20 years, we would have accepted the proposal by one government agency—they were willing to give permanent residency to about 900 long-term guest workers that have passed their criteria (profession/skill, salary range, length of stay, educational achievement, taxpayer, and no criminal record). But because we were thinking of a bigger fraction, we did not buy it. Again, between these two, the second one is more useful to the economy and workforce of the

CNMI with its criteria.

They are saying: "Federalization, You asked for it, you got it!" Please be reminded that before the Unity March was organized, there was still a grandfathering provision included. And we were there on the street requesting to retain that grandfathering provision. But we were not lucky enough to be heard. Some people are pointing their fingers at the Unity March organizers for the passage of the federalization bill. If that is true, then we would have insisted that the grandfathering should not be removed.

Personally, if federalization is not good for the whole guest workers, it might be good for some. It might be good for the U.S. citizen children of guest workers. We believe that no single law fits everybody anyway. If this is not good for us, it might be good for you. So just be thankful.

The Unity Core Group is just waiting for the federalization regulations to come out. But right now, we already have Plan A and Plan B actions, hoping to be heard. More drastic, more intense, another first in CNMI history. And we hope to get support again from the public who supported the Unity March a year ago.

Honestly, at this point of time, nobody should blame anybody. Federalization, PL15-108, and the Unity March and its organizers and supporters are not the ones that caused the down economy, not the reason why locals or guest workers cannot find jobs anymore. It's global. Watch CNN, Fox News, TFC, its happening around the world. Are those countries having pending federalization bills for implementation? Do they have PL15-108? Were there Unity Marches that also happened last Dec. 27, 2007? Get real.

Maria Lourdes Berueco
via e-mail

KUDO Awards

And this week's "KUDO" awards go to the following winners:

1) Deanne Siemer for "transparency" above and beyond any government official (with several exceptions). In writing a secret letter to Cinta Kaipat on "how to deal with that freshman upstart Tina Sablan," this upstanding "volunteer" lawyer copied the letter to—yes—Tina herself. It's hard to conceive of a noted attorney doing something like this by accident (that would be too foolish for even a government official). So one must assume that this was done in the grand spirit of transparency. If only all officials would follow this lead, the people of Saipan might begin to fathom the workings of our government.

2) Press secretary Charles Reyes Jr., for his most entertaining comments, providing the readers with daily chuckles. His latest understatement, regarding Siemer's letter to Sablan, was sent "by

mistake, apparently" (ya think??). Hmmm, somewhere I seemed to have missed any real response regarding the negative impact of this very disturbing letter. Oh well, business as usual. Charlie: keep up the daily rhetoric; very entertaining, amusing, and better than reading the funnies. Your current job is great preparation for a future as a Comedy Central stand-up comedian...or a puppeteer.

3) The Executive Branch who is telling everyone to tighten their belt, that the economy is belly up, and that we all must make great sacrifice during this time of economic hardship; and then overspent their FY 2008 budget to the tune of \$11.9 million, far exceeding any other governmental agency. Not much comment needed here. Guess one could conclude that there's not much belt tightening on Capital Hill.

4) And the top KUDO award of the week goes to CUC's ex-

ecutive director Tony Muna for threatening to turn off power to PSS—and then somehow justifying it by placing the blame on Shell, Mobil, Agrekko, space aliens, cosmic dust, cancer, and brown tree snakes. Now, am I missing something? Are not CUC and PSS part of the same CNMI government? Further, if the Executive Branch stayed within the limit of their budget, the power could stay on, the kids would continue to learn, and the adults will look like they might know what they're doing. Maybe the space aliens would do a better job. For that matter, let the students run the government...it would be a lot cheaper and a heck of a lot more productive.

Bill Weiss
Puerto Rico, Saipan

Bleakness Scrooges Christmas

There's the thunderous roar for bailouts by US carmakers as conservative congressional representatives cringe at the thought of taxpayers paying for it. There are also the bankrupt state governments seeking billions to stay afloat. Here at home, a bleak picture of what lies ahead triggers the inevitable sinking feeling of helplessness.

You quiz how the President-elect would dispose of the combined national bankruptcies—government and private industries—as he heads to his new residence on Pennsylvania Avenue. After feeding off the hog's back, labor unions must defray any and all restructuring costs of the big three automakers. If there's nothing up that alley, then let bankruptcies take a free fall. Taxpayers across the country had nothing to do with the excesses of the auto industry and labor union bosses.

Closer to home, I've done critical review of the economic study commissioned by the Department of the Interior that also peeked into US policy out here over the last three decades. Two issues were prominent in this section of the report:

1). A critical note of studies done in years past that recommended against federalization of labor and immigration. 2). The

lack of consistency in how the federal government has handled major economic policy issues, including the lack of representation on Capitol Hill and Pennsylvania Avenue for the NMI and other insular possessions.

It strongly recommended deletion of the two provisions now under federalization. It further recommended revisiting certain substantive provisions of the Covenant Agreement to ascertain non-unilateral disposition of the political and economic fate the NMI from the other side of the Pacific. These recommendations make sense but the question is: Are we sensible enough to grasp the essence of protecting the rights of indigenous governance for greater degree of self-government?

If we miss this critically substantive point, then it is equally an exercise in futility going through the democratic exercise of voting for titular heads and policymakers who fail to see their primary fiduciary responsibilities of building and strengthening our democratic institutions by protecting what's rightfully the purview of local governance. How sad that the lights are on but nobody is home.

Obit of a friend

James "Jim" Raymond Fauls died May 8, 2008 at his home in Tianjin, China, located near the country's capitol of Beijing. He was 49 years old. Jim moved to Stuart with his family in 1974. After graduating from the University of Florida, he began his career as a teacher at South Fork High School before moving to Guam, and then to Thailand, where he lived and taught for many years. At the time of his death he had been living and teaching in China for a year. Survivors include his mother, Betty Fauls, of Stuart, and his sister, Mary Beth West, also of Stuart. Contributions in Jim's memory may be made to the Martin County Literacy Council, Blake Library, 2351 SE Monterey Rd., Stuart, 34996. Published in the TC Palm on 7/20/2008

I first met Jim when he moved to Guam, we taught together for

a couple of years and kept in touch through e-mail. Years later I would find myself on Saipan and he still in Guam for all those years. Then he asked if I could get him a job on Saipan, which I did and he came to Saipan to teach at MHS as an earth science teacher. Funny because he was an English teacher by trade and never taught science, but that class had some serious writings. He was a riot, he had a lot of crazy ideas only matched by my own. I knew he was an incredible English teacher, and I think that's why today I probably look at English teachers with a different respect. But he had his demons, and boy, on an island they can get you and so as good as he was a teacher, I knew he had a different destiny. He followed on to Kagman High School after that and then finally moving to China. We still kept the e-mail

going as he always read the Saipan newspapers online. His last one was just a few days before his death. I had been trying to get a hold of him since then because I hadn't heard from him in far too long and then his e-mail accounts were closed and those of you who know him as the crazy guy he is would know that's not good. Anyway...so here I find the final obit in his hometown newspaper. I don't know how he died but I'd like to think it was much the same way one of his literary friends could imagine like Thoreau, Frost, or Hemingway. Godspeed to ya 'Jimmie'. You'll be missed.

Craig H. Garrison
As Lito, Saipan

Business

Retail sales and prices fall again

WASHINGTON (AP)—Signs that the recession will be long and severe mounted Friday with a fresh round of bad economic news, including plunging sales from manufacturers to stores and falling prices that raise fears of dangerous deflation.

The widening economic troubles did put a lid on inflation. But they raised concerns about the opposite threat—the potential for a bout of deflation that could drag down incomes, clobber home prices even more and shrink corporate profits.

“Everything is going wrong in the fourth quarter,” said Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody’s Economy.com. “We have collapses in consumer spending, housing and now investment. Business is just shutting down.”

The new batch of data showed retail sales fell by 1.8 percent in November, marking a record fifth straight monthly decline. The weakness was led by another sharp drop in auto sales—the worst sales month for automakers in 26 years.



A store advertises that it is going out of business Wednesday, Dec. 10, 2008, in New York.

The stock market has shown signs of settling down the past two weeks. While there’s still volatility, the terrifying lurches of several hundred points at

a time have become rarer.

The Dow has closed between 8,000 and 9,000 for 15 trading sessions in a row. And on two of the last three days,

it has moved only double digits for the day, the first time that has happened since Lehman Brothers went bust in mid-September.

White House assessing options to aid US carmakers

WASHINGTON (AP)—The White House weighed its options Saturday for preventing a collapse of the troubled auto industry, once the backbone of the U.S. economy. So far, the only thing certain is that the Bush administration wants to avoid the possibility of a disorderly bankruptcy of any of the Big Three.

General Motors Corp. and Chrysler LLC have said they could run out of cash within weeks without government help.

“Administration officials are continuing to gather financial information from the automakers, assessing the data, their cash position going forward,” White House deputy press secretary Tony Fratto said Saturday. “We’ll take a look at that information, make some judgments and review our options.”

Any avenue of government rescue must surmount political obstacles and take into account the potential fallout on financial markets in a time of recession. The administration is keeping President-elect Barack Obama and his

advisers abreast of its discussions.

“We’ll be focused on trying to get

the policy right while considering the best interests of the taxpayer and our

GM to temporarily close 20 plants

NEW YORK (AP)—General Motors Corp. said Friday it will temporarily close 20 factories across North America and make sweeping cuts to its vehicle production as it tries to adjust to dramatically weaker automobile demand.

GM said it will cut 250,000 vehicles from its production schedule for the first quarter of 2009, which includes a cut of 60,000 vehicles announced last week. Normal production would be around 750,000 cars and trucks for the quarter, spokesman Tony Sapienza said.

Many plants will be shut down for the whole month of January, he said, and all told, the factories will be closed for 30 percent of the quarter.

“We’re adjusting pretty dramatically,” spokesman Chris Lee said.

The move affects most of GM’s plants in the U.S., Canada and Mexico. During

the shutdowns, employees will be temporarily laid off and receive a portion of their normal pay from the company. They can also apply for state unemployment benefits, Lee said.

GM and nearly all automakers who sell in the U.S. are mired in the worst sales slump in 26 years. GM reported its sales in the U.S. plunged 41 percent in November and are down 22 percent for the first 11 months of the year compared with the same period last year.

Cash-strapped GM is seeking government loans to stay in operation beyond the end of the year. The White House said Friday it may tap into its \$700 billion Wall Street bailout fund to help GM and Chrysler stay in business after the Senate blocked a measure to provide \$14 billion in immediate loans.

economy, and we’ll take the time we have available to do that right,” Fratto said. “No decisions have been made.”

The White House and congressional Democrats had agreed on a \$14 billion measure that would have extended short-term financing to the industry and set up a “car czar” to make sure the money was used to turn the Big Three into competitive companies. The legislation, however, died when Senate Republicans demanded upfront pay and benefit concessions from the United Auto Workers that union officials rejected.

The failure on Capitol Hill prompted urgent requests for White House intervention. Administration officials were dispatched to weigh the pros and cons of a range of other bailout actions. White House and Treasury Department officials are keeping details of their discussions closely held for fear of affecting markets, but financial experts have zeroed in on a few likely avenues for helping the auto industry and its 3 million workers.

List of potential victims grows in NY fraud case

NEW YORK (AP)—Investors who put their fortunes in the hands of arrested New York money manager Bernard Madoff are waiting to hear how much of their stake is left.

The roster of potential victims in what prosecutors said was a \$50 billion Ponzi scheme has grown exponentially longer in the past few days.

Madoff, 70, said in regulatory filings that he only had around 25 clients, but it has become apparent that the list of people who lost money may number in the hundreds or even thousands.

Among those who have acknowledged potential losses so far: Former Philadelphia Eagles owner Norman Braman, New York Mets owner Fred Wilpon and J. Ezra Merkin, the chairman of GMAC Financial Services.

A charity in Massachusetts that supports Jewish programs, the Robert I. Lappin Charitable Foundation, said it had invested its entire \$8 million endowment with Madoff. The organization’s executive director said she doesn’t expect it to survive.

Other institutions that believed they had lost millions included The North Shore-Long Island Jewish Health System and the Texas-based Julian J. Levitt Foundation.

Hedge funds and other investment groups looked like big losers too. The Fairfield Greenwich Group said it had some \$7.5 billion in investments linked to Madoff. A private Swiss bank, Banque Benedict Hentsch Fairfield Partners SA, said it had \$47.5 million worth of client assets at risk.

The losses may have extended far beyond the coffers of the wealthy and powerful.

The town of Fairfield, Conn., said it placed nearly 15 percent of its retiree pension fund with Madoff. Officials were scrambling to determine how much of the \$42 million remained.



BUSINESS BRIEFS

Canada agrees on conditional auto aid plan

TORONTO (AP)—Canada’s federal government and the province of Ontario agreed Friday to provide \$3.5 billion Canadian dollars (\$2.8 billion) for the Canadian auto industry. Federal Industry Minister Tony Clement said that is the equivalent of 20 percent of the \$14 billion that the Bush administration is considering in emergency aid for General Motors Corp., Ford Motor Co. and Chrysler. Clement said the main auto manufacture restructuring will be done in the United States, but Canada is also prepared to provide help to save the troubled industry, which employs hundreds of thousands of direct and spinoff jobs in Ontario, which is across the border from Detroit in the U.S. state of Michigan. The Detroit Big Three automakers currently employ more than 30,000 people

at car assembly plants in Ontario.

Areas near parks dropped from oil drilling plan

SALT LAKE CITY (AP)—The Bureau of Land Management has dropped more than half the parcels it originally proposed for an oil and gas lease sale next week, many of which were criticized because of their proximity to southern Utah national parks. The agency’s final list for the Dec. 19 sale was released on Friday and includes 132 parcels totaling 164,000 acres. The sale has been controversial since details were first announced Nov. 4. The BLM at that time proposed lease sales on 359,000 acres in Utah. After the proposal was criticized by the National Park Service, a fellow federal agency, and environmental groups, the BLM removed more than 37,000 acres near Utah’s national parks.

Another 80,000 acres in western Utah were dropped so the agency can conduct an environmental analysis.

WTO chief sees no new talks for months

PARIS (AP)—The head of the World Trade Organization does not expect stalled global trade talks to resume until a few months after U.S. President-elect Barack Obama is inaugurated in January. WTO chief Pascal Lamy says in an interview with the French daily Le Monde published Saturday that it will take several months after Obama’s arrival at the White House for efforts to secure a new global commerce pact to begin again. The WTO acknowledged Friday it had failed to secure a new agreement before the end of the year because of disagreement between the United States and emerging economies over trade rules applying to agricultural

and industrial goods.

Swiss bank says it has \$48M invested with Madoff

GENEVA (AP)—A private Swiss bank says it has 56 million Swiss francs (\$47.5 million) of client assets invested under the management of U.S. financier Bernard L. Madoff, who has been accused of securities fraud. Banque Benedict Hentsch Fairfield Partners SA said in a statement on its Web site Saturday that it is taking “all necessary measures to protect the interests of its clientele and its own interests.” Madoff, a former Nasdaq stock market chairman, was arrested Thursday in New York hours after the collapse of Bernard L. Madoff Investment Securities LLC. He has been accused by U.S. authorities of running a phony investment business that lost at least \$50 billion.

LA hospital CEO pleads guilty to health care fraud

LOS ANGELES (AP)—A former hospital executive admitted Friday he paid a man to recruit homeless people for unnecessary medical treatment in a scheme to bilk government health programs out of millions of dollars. Dr. Rudra Sabaratnam, who ran City of Angels Medical Center, faces up to 10 years in federal prison after pleading guilty to paying a recruiter nearly \$500,000 to find Skid Row homeless people with Medi-Cal or Medicare cards and transport them to the hospital. In his plea agreement, which remains under seal, Sabaratnam also agreed to pay more than \$4.1 million in restitution to Medicare and Medi-Cal. Sabaratnam, 64, is scheduled to be sentenced June 8 on two counts of illegal patient referrals.

Nation

Obama faces heady challenges, and they're growing

WASHINGTON (AP)—President-elect Barack Obama, relatively young and inexperienced, is facing a rapidly growing list of monumental challenges as he prepares to take the reins of a nation in turmoil.

"I do not underestimate the enormity of the task that lies ahead," Obama said after his historic election a little more than a month ago.

It was a sobering assessment

at the time, but the country's problems have only worsened since then. Now, Obama sounds dire, particularly as he talks about the economy: "We're in an emergency."

He spoke during a week in which Congress killed a bailout of the failing auto industry, the government reported that jobless claims spiked to their highest levels in more than a quarter-century, and the Treas-

ury Department said the nation registered a record federal budget deficit for November.

With woes foreign and domestic on more fronts than even Franklin Delano Roosevelt encountered when he took office in the midst of the Great Depression, Obama will be sworn in as the country's 44th president in January.



Obama

His leadership will be tested immediately and in many ways. His performance from the outset could well set the tone for his presidency.

Not only is Obama saddled with lingering wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that he is inheriting from President George W. Bush, but he also must deal with: -a deepening recession in the

U.S. and a spreading global economic crisis.

■ an automotive industry on the brink of collapse and soaring national debt.

■ increasing unemployment and its ripple effects.

■ the threat of terrorism amid a historic transfer of power.

Obama also has promised an ambitious foreign and domestic policy agenda that includes withdrawing most U.S. combat troops from Iraq, cleaning

up government, overhauling the health care system, fighting global warming and developing alternative energy sources.

Some priorities may fall to the wayside or be done piecemeal. But, so far, he has signaled an intent to move forward on much if not all of those plans. The question is how quickly he can accomplish his goals, while simultaneously confronting the growing list of major problems.

ACROSS THE NATION

Police: pizza man's cheesy weapon foils a stickup

MIRAMAR, Fla. (AP)—Police say a pizza delivery man fought back with the one weapon he had handy when a gun was pulled on him in a stickup: A large, hot pepperoni pizza. Delivery man Eric Lopez Devictoria, 40, flung the steaming pie at the gunman, buying time as he ran for safety, police said. At least one shot was fired as Devictoria fled, but the deliveryman wasn't hurt and was able to quickly call police, according to authorities. Three teenage suspects were nabbed soon after Wednesday's run-in with the cheesy weapon, police said, adding they were charged with armed robbery.

Riot, hostage situation ends at West Texas prison

PECOS, Texas (AP)—An uprising at a privately run prison in West Texas ended Saturday morning after two hostages were released, authorities said. Outside law enforcement officers returned control of the Reeves County Detention Center back to prison personnel about 6:30 a.m., said Patricia Dieschler, a state Department of Public Safety dispatcher. Responding law enforcement officers were not injured, Dieschler said. Prison officials declined to comment Saturday. Federal inmates at the prison took two prison employees hostage when the disturbance erupted Friday. Prison officials did not release the names of the two employees, who are recreation specialists at the prison. The hostages were released late Friday night. The inmates, who include immigration detainees, were asking for better medical treatment, DPS Trooper John Barton told the Pecos Enterprise.

Chief: Gov. Palin's home church damaged by arson

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP)—Gov. Sarah Palin's home church was badly damaged by arson, leading the

governor to apologize if the fire was connected to "undeserved negative attention" from her failed campaign as the Republican vice presidential nominee. Damage to the Wasilla Bible Church was estimated at \$1 million, authorities said Saturday. No one was injured in the fire, which was set Friday night while a handful of people, including two children, were inside, according to Central Mat-Su Fire Chief James Steele. He said the blaze was being investigated as an arson but didn't know of any recent threats to the church. Authorities didn't know whether Palin's connection to the church was relevant to the fire, Steele said. "It's hard to say at this point. Everything is just speculation," he said. "We have no information on intent or motive."

Ore. bank blast kills police officer, bomb expert

WOODBURN, Ore. (AP)—A bomb explosion at a bank killed both a police officer and a state bomb disposal technician, and state police do not have any suspects, officials said Saturday. The explosion occurred Friday afternoon at a West Coast Bank branch office in the agricultural town of Woodburn, which is nearly 30 miles south of Portland. Police went to check on a telephoned bomb threat received by a Wells Fargo branch bank in the center of town and found a suspicious device, but that device was determined to be harmless. But police said the investigation there led them to the nearby West Coast office where the bomb was found. Woodburn police Capt. Tom Tennant and state Senior Trooper William Hakim, both 51, died at the scene. Tennant was a 28-year veteran of the Woodburn police department, and Hakim, a bomb technician, had been with the force for 11 years. Woodburn police Chief Scott Russell, 46, was injured and in stable but critical condition at a Portland hospital. He has been with the police department for 20 years.



POWER RESTORATION

Crews work to clear roads in Washington, N.H., Saturday, Dec. 13, 2008, clearing a way for utility crews that were working to restore electricity. More than 1 million homes and businesses lost power following an ice storm Friday. Utilities in New Hampshire said it would likely be Thursday or Friday—a week after the storm—before all power is restored in the region, partly because of the sheer number of outages and partly because of the devastation.

Disgraced Illinois governor weighs legal options

CHICAGO (AP)—Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich met with a renowned Chicago criminal lawyer Saturday as he weighed his legal options on how to fight a scandal that has left his career in tatters and disrupted President-elect Barack Obama's White House transition.

The Democratic governor had a four-hour meeting with Ed Genson in the lawyer's downtown office Saturday. Genson has defended newspaper baron Conrad Black, R&B singer R. Kelly and numerous public figures on corruption charges, earning a reputation as the lawyer big shots call when they get in a bind in Chicago.



Blagojevich

Genson confirmed the two met but wouldn't discuss details of their dialogue. When asked if he would take the case, Genson said: "We'll make our mutual decision on Monday."

Blagojevich had brushed back calls for his resignation after he was charged with trying to sell Obama's Senate seat. He sought to project a business-as-usual image amid the turmoil, going to work every day and handling state business.

As the legal maneuvering intensified, some observers speculated that he might be trying to leverage the governorship to his advantage in his criminal case—just like prosecutors said he did with the Senate seat for financial gain.

"I would be saying, 'Let me see what I can get in exchange for you resigning. Don't just give it up for nothing. Let me see if I can get you a better deal,'" said Steve Cron, a defense lawyer from Santa Monica, Calif.

Illinois corruption: Deep roots, tough to weed out

CHICAGO (AP)—More than 25 years ago, a visiting small-town judge stashed a tape recorder in his cowboy boot and came away with shocking evidence of bribe-taking and bagmen in Chicago's courts.

Former Judge Brocton Lockwood was part of an unprecedented FBI sting operation in the Cook County courts called "Operation Greylord" that uncovered judges, lawyers and clerks taking cash, fixing cases and engaging in other brazen judicial corruption.

The case is a stark example of the corruption that has become a cottage industry in Illinois and contributed to its long history of scoundrels and scandals. Last week, there was an

addition to the list: Gov. Rod Blagojevich's arrest on charges that he schemed to auction off President-elect Barack Obama's open Senate seat.

So when the governor was escorted by federal agents from his home in handcuffs, it seemed painfully familiar to Lockwood.

"I thought nothing has changed," the retired judge said. "I'm embarrassed for the state. I'm disappointed for the nation because this is going to divert attention from Obama's efforts to deal with bigger issues than Blagojevich. ... It just makes politics a sleazy business."

Lockwood's puzzlement was echoed by people around

the nation as the Blagojevich scandal unfolded: What is it about Illinois that seems to breed political corruption, and why hasn't anyone been able to do anything about it?

Corruption and graft have become so entrenched over the decades that they've become part of the political culture, and experts cite a list of reasons why: Weak state campaign finance laws that have allowed influence peddlers to make big contributions. Lawmakers who don't always get close scrutiny. A patronage system that makes employees beholden to political bosses. And a jaded public that seems to accept chicanery as the cost of doing business.

Asia

Militants kill three, kidnap others in attack in Basilan

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Armed militants stormed a house on a southern Philippine island Saturday, killing two members of a civilian militia and a woman before kidnapping three other civilians, the military said.

The military blamed the attack on al-Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf terrorists, but local officials said another separatist group was responsible.

Lt. Steffani Cacho, spokeswoman of the military's Western Mindanao Command, said it was not clear what triggered the attack on Basilan island, located 560 miles (900 kilome-

ters) south of Manila.

Militants used the three civilians as human shields and kidnapped them as they fled pursuing troops, she said.

Local officials in Basilan's Lamitan township said the attack forced about 600 villagers to flee from their homes and seek refuge in a public school building.

Cacho said military reports showed Abu Sayyaf was responsible for the attack on the militia members. Armed civilian groups are common throughout the Philippines to assist authorities fighting various rebel movements.

Lamitan officials, meanwhile, said the attack was carried out by suspected members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the country's largest Muslim separatist group. They had been negotiating with the government for self-rule in the south, but talks collapsed after major fighting erupted four-months ago.

Abu Sayyaf has been behind a string of kidnappings for ransom, including of European and Americans. The group, on a U.S. list of terrorist organizations with links to al-Qaida, has also plotted bombings and beheaded hostages.

Chen's graft charges stun Taiwan

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP)—Businesspeople rushed to deliver expensive jewelry and cardboard boxes stuffed with cash to the tree-canopied mansion of Taiwan's top leader to secure valuable political favors.

Topflight chefs prepared exotic dishes to tempt the palate—and win the allegiance—of his wheelchair-bound wife.

Those are some of the allegations emerging from a months-long corruption probe into the activities of former Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian. While the probe is still continuing, it reached a climax of sorts Friday when prosecutors indicted the 57-year-old Chen on charges of embezzlement and laundering ill-gotten bribes.

Chen's wife, together with 13 other family members and close associates, were also indicted in the case.

The depth of the charges against Chen stunned ordinary

Taiwanese, who believed their rapidly evolving democracy had finally put an end to decades of endemic political corruption.

The 100-page indictment catalogued a litany of alleged offenses and shed new light on Chen's ap-

parent taste for the high life. The son of a poor farmer from southern Taiwan, he was first elected president in 2000, riding to victory on the coattails of his clean-cut image and insistent pledges to clean up Taiwan's politics.

Captured gunman's confession sheds light on Mumbai assault

MUMBAI, India (AP)—The gunman captured in last month's Mumbai attacks had originally intended to seize hostages and outline demands in a series of dramatic calls to the media, according to his confession obtained Saturday by The Associated Press.

Mohammed Ajmal Kasab said he and his partner, who massacred dozens of people in the city's main train station, had planned a rooftop standoff, but abandoned the plans because they couldn't find a suitable building, the state-

ment to police says.

Kasab's seven-page confession, given to police over repeated interrogations, offers chilling new details of the three-day rampage through India's commercial center that left 164 people plus nine gunmen dead.

He said the assault, which started Nov. 26, was initially set for Sept. 27, though he doesn't explain why it was delayed. The gunmen had been told by their handlers to carry out the attacks during rush hours when the station is teeming with commuters.

ing its influence to force Thaksin's political allies from power despite their winning elections a year ago. They criticized efforts by the opposition Democrat Party to form a new government as early as Monday. Previous Prime Minister Somchai Wongsawat was forced to step down earlier this month, when a court dissolved his pro-Thaksin People's Power Party for fraud committed in the December 2007 election that brought it to power. Thaksin, self-exiled since a 2006 military coup, delivered his prerecorded video address at 9 p.m.

Sri Lankan air force bombs rebels in north

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP)—Sri Lankan air force Saturday bombed ethnic Tamil separatists near their de facto capital in the north, the government said, while a pro-rebel report said artillery shells fired by government troops killed an infant and two others. Fighter jets bombed nine times to the west and northwest of the Tamil Tiger rebel headquarters in Kilinochchi, military spokesman Brig. Udaya Nanayakkara said. He said pilots confirmed some rebel bunkers were successfully hit but casualty details were not available. Meanwhile rebel-affiliated TamilNet Web site reported that government soldiers fired artillery into two rebel-held villages, killing three civilians displaced by the war.

World

Indian navy captures 23 pirates

NEW DELHI (AP)—The Indian navy captured 23 pirates who threatened a merchant vessel in the lawless waters of the Gulf of Aden and a German naval helicopter thwarted another attack Saturday on a freighter being chased by speedboats off Yemen.

The successes came days before Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was to ask the United Nations to authorize "all necessary measures" against increasingly bold Somali pirates operating in one of the world's busiest shipping lanes.

An Indian navy ship, the

INS Mysore, was escorting merchant ships in waters off Somalia's coast Saturday when it received a distress call from seamen on board the MV Gibe, who said they were being fired on by two boats that were approaching fast.

The Mysore and its helicopter sped to the scene, and the pirate boats attempted to escape when they saw them, according to a statement from the Indian government.

Indian marine commandos boarded the pirate boats and seized "a substantial cache of arms and equipment," includ-

ing seven AK-47 assault rifles, three machine guns, a rocket-propelled grenade launcher and other weapons, the statement said. They also found a GPS receiver and other equipment.

The pirates were from Somalia and Yemen, two countries on the coast of the Gulf of Aden. The Gibe was flying an Ethiopian flag but little else was known about it, the Indian statement said.

Last month, India's navy drew criticism after sinking a Thai fishing trawler that had been commandeered hours earlier by pirates.

US troops to stay in Iraqi cities after June

BAGHDAD (AP)—Some American troops will remain in Iraqi cities after a June 30 deadline for combat soldiers to leave urban areas, the top U.S.

commander said Saturday.

Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, meanwhile, dismissed suggestions by his own spokesman that the Iraqi government

may ask some U.S. troops to remain behind as trainers after the Dec. 31, 2011 deadline for the withdrawal of all American troops set by the new U.S.-Iraq security agreement.

Those comments are likely to rekindle debate here about the agreement, which was ratified by parliament last month and takes effect Jan. 1. But Iraqi voters must approve the deal in a referendum by the end of July.

Suggestions of loopholes in the withdrawal timeline could be exploited by Iraqi politicians seeking to undermine al-Maliki ahead of the referendum. A number of Sunni and Shiite politicians, as well as the powerful Shiite clergy, accepted the deal after assurances from al-Maliki that the timeline for the U.S. departure was firm.



A U.S. Army soldier from 3rd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment stands guard during a visit by the commander of U.S. troops in northern Iraq to Mosul, 360 kilometers (225 miles) northwest of Baghdad on Wednesday, Dec. 10, 2008.

WORLD BRIEFS

Zimbabwe: Cholera introduced by West

HARARE, Zimbabwe (AP)—Zimbabwe on Saturday accused the West of waging biological warfare to deliberately start a cholera epidemic that has killed hundreds of people and sickened thousands. The spread of the disease has focused the world's attention on the spectacular collapse of the southern African nation, which often blames its troubles on the West. The claims in state media came the same day the government issued an official announcement detailing the constitutional amendment creating the post of prime minister.

Mexican schools close as children are threatened

CIUDAD JUAREZ, Mexico (AP)—Across Ciudad Juarez, parents and students are stricken by reports of kidnapping and extortion threats, starting with a sign that appeared Nov. 12 on the front door of another school, the Elena Garro kindergarten, demanding: "Either give us your bonuses, or we will start to kidnap the children." Police removed it before the children arrived. Some speculate that cartels now are targeting schools to supplement income with the Mexican government's crackdown on drug trafficking, much as they've already extorted businesses. Others say common criminals are trying to cash in on the fear that pervades border cities, where terrified residents are seeing ever more brutal murders—more

than 1,300 so far this year in Ciudad Juarez.

Rioters in Greece attack police station, banks

ATHENS, Greece (AP)—Rioting youths in the Greek capital attacked a police station, stores and banks and fought running battles with police late Saturday, authorities said, as violent protests against a police killing continued for the seventh straight day. The clashes broke out as candlelit vigils were being held to mark a week since the police shooting of a 15-year-old boy, which triggered the riots that are threatening the stability of the government. Youths—some on foot, others riding motorcycles—attacked a police station with petrol bombs in central Athens as well as at least three banks, several stores and a government building, police said.

Vatican's Christmas tree lit

VATICAN CITY (AP)—The Vatican's tallest Christmas tree is twinkling in St. Peter's Square. The Vatican says the 109-foot (33-meter) red spruce from Austria's Piesting Valley is the tallest since Pope John Paul II started the tradition of setting up a tree in the square in 1982. Hundreds of pilgrims from Austria sang carols in the pouring rain Saturday as the tree was officially unveiled. It is decorated with 2,000 gold and silver balls, white lights and a shining star. It stands next to a larger-than-life-sized Nativity scene which will be unveiled Christmas Eve.

ASIAN BRIEFS

Philippine forces foil bomb plot in Manila, other cities

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Security forces have foiled a plot by al-Qaida-linked militants to set off bombs in Manila and other major Philippine cities with the arrest of an alleged conspirator, the national police chief said Friday. Suspected militant Guiamaludin Edsrafil—wanted for multiple murder and attempted murder for his alleged role in bombings in the country's troubled south—was arrested Tuesday in southern Cotabato city possessing some components for making bombs, police Director General Jesus Verzosa said. Verzosa said Edsrafil belonged to a terrorist cell of the Special Operations Group of the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

Thai ex-PM warns of 'interference' in democracy

BANGKOK, Thailand (AP)—Thailand's ousted leader Thaksin Shinawatra addressed tens of thousands of supporters by video from exile Saturday, warning against efforts to "interfere" in democracy as lawmakers prepared to select yet another new prime minister amid political crisis. For most of the day, the red-shirted crowd—estimated by police at 30,000 to 40,000—cheered and danced as speaker after speaker accused the army of us-

Health & Fitness

Who says you can't shop and then drop for a few push-ups?

By VICKY HALLETT
(C) 2008, THE WASHINGTON POST

WASHINGTON—Your social calendar is packed with holiday soirees. There are the cocktail parties, office must-shows, family get-togethers. Every other waking hour is devoted to gift-hunting. So when do you squeeze in a gym visit? You probably don't.

But there's no need to resign yourself to a Santa physique. I present three ways to make your December world a workout wonderland.

MALL MAKEOVER

Take, for instance, all those hours you'll be logging at massive shopping centers. You could circle around the parking lot until you find a primo space, target stores in the most direct possible fashion and then pig out at the food court. Or you could handle mall visits our way, with the help of Nathan Stormer, Washington area fitness manager for Bally Total Fitness. He's brimming with fat-burning ideas.

For starters, park at the far end of the lot. You'll still have plenty of time inside to hear that Christmas Muzak, but this way you get in a few minutes of fresh air and the chance to use open space. Stormer suggests that you make the trek with walking lunges or side squats. It looks a tad silly, but as he explains, "Any time you move in a lateral motion, you burn

more calories."

Once you've made some purchases, any movement is going to be more effective because you're holding weights. "The primary thing to remember is that shopping bags are a kind of resistance," Stormer says. Use them for biceps curls, overhead presses or lateral raises while debating whether your mother-in-law would really enjoy that birding book. Waiting in line? Stand on one leg and pump the other leg back, knee bent or straight, to engage your glutes. Points deducted for kicking the shopper behind you.

Between each store, try taking a lap around the level. Think of it as window shopping with benefits: You're on your way to racking up serious mileage.

When it's time to take a break, shield your eyes from Auntie Anne's and find a bench instead. But don't just use it to plop your butt down. Start with triceps dips. Hold on to the bench's edge while sinking your rear below the seat, and then press up. Or flip your body around, place your hands down and go into elevated push-ups and plank pose.

You're worried about stares, right? No need, apparently. When we tried this routine out at the Fashion Centre at Pentagon City in Virginia, other shoppers

just passed by on their merry way. (Although management did swoop in to advise us that the benches were not built to be used as exercise equipment. So be careful and don't get them too sweaty, okay?)

GOOD-FOR-YOU GATHERINGS

Maybe you can't control what

your pals have planned for their yuletide events, but at least your holiday bash can involve literally rocking around the Christmas tree. After all, po-

lite guests know to follow the leader, says D.C.-based party planner Jodi Moraru. "So if the host and hostess start dancing, other people will, too," she says, noting that a DJ or a peppy iPod playlist can be key in motivating folks to cut a rug. Also: Offer prizes!

More Prancer than Dancer? If you have a few pals who live in the same area, consider throwing a progressive party: Start off in one house, then hoof it over to a few others throughout the night. Or make the main attraction scoping out the holiday decorations in your neighborhood. As long as they're fortified with mugs of glogg, guests will be game.

Just playing works, too. Moraru's family get-togethers usually involve Twister, which gets both kids and grown-ups up and moving. And you don't have to merely watch football. You can actually get a match going in your own yard.

DATE NIGHT ON ICE

And if you end up under the mistletoe during one of these

active affairs? There's no better place to take a wintertime love interest than the National Gallery of Art Sculpture Garden ice rink: music in the air, masterpieces in sight and lots of opportunities for touching each other. It's \$7 per adult for a two-hour session (\$6 for kids and seniors), and \$3 for skate rental. And while families with wee ones rule during the day, they're long tucked in bed by the 11 p.m. closing time on Friday and Saturday nights. Even with a hot cocoa nightcap, this is certainly better for your waistline than dinner and a movie.

There are nearby backup options for when your backside needs a break, whether it's from figure eights or falling down. Hop inside the East Building to take a peek at that hot Pompeii exhibit, head over to the newly reopened National Museum of American History (and join the holiday music singalongs on weekends) or stroll by the magical train display at the U.S. Botanic Garden. All are in walking distance, just far enough away to encourage hand-holding for warmth.

I don't think it can get any holly jollier than that.

Shopping is not just about getting "stuff." You can actually turn it into a chance to get some serious exercise.



What you need to know about Vitamin D

By SHARI ROAN
(C) 2008, LOS ANGELES TIMES

The new star of the nutritional world is clearly vitamin D. Most people don't get enough of this wonder nutrient and increase their risk of several diseases by being deficient. In the past month, several major medical groups have called for a range of policy changes regarding vitamin D, including an increase in the current recommended daily allowance and new testing guidelines to look for deficiencies. Here's an update:

■ A group of 18 vitamin D researchers at the University of California has issued a "call to action" recommending that the daily intake of vitamin D for adults be revised by the government to 2,000 international units a day. (The current recommendation is 200 IU for people up to age 50, 400 IU for people 51 to 70 and 600 IU for people 70 and older.) "While more research on this topic is highly desirable, it should not delay recommending a 2,000

IU daily intake of vitamin D for most people," a member of the consortium, Dr. Anthony Norman, said in a news release. An editorial on vitamin D by Norman, a University of California, Riverside biochemist, was published Monday in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.

■ A review article published Tuesday in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology includes recommendations for screening for vitamin D deficiency and treatment in people with cardiovascular disease. The recommendations are needed, according to the authors of the paper, because of the growing body of evidence that links vitamin D deficiency to cardiovascular problems. They say that cardiovascular patients with a deficiency should receive 50,000 IU of vitamin D2 or D3 (forms of the vitamin) once a week for eight to 12 weeks followed by maintenance therapy.

■ In October, the American Academy of Pediatrics published a recommendation that

the amount of vitamin D for infants, children and adolescence should be doubled to 400 IU a day.

Studies have linked vitamin D deficiency with an increased risk of hypertension, obesity, diabetes, heart attack, stroke and some types of cancer.

"Vitamin D deficiency is an unrecognized, emerging cardiovascular risk factor, which should be screened for and treated," Kansas City cardiologist James H. O'Keefe, a co-author of the JACC article, said in a news release. "Vitamin D is easy to assess, supplementation is simple, safe and inexpensive."

Optimal levels of vitamin D can be achieved by a combination of sunlight, supplements and foods such as fish, eggs and cod liver oil. Foods such as milk and some cereals are fortified with vitamin D but at levels that aim for 400 IU a day—which is now thought to be much too low. Vitamin D toxicity (taking too much) is rare but is possible if the intake is greater than 20,000 IU per day.

By JEANNINE STEIN
(C) 2008, LOS ANGELES TIMES

There might be a way to predict whether young children will grow into active teens—or fall prey to a more sedentary lifestyle. The key? Motor skills.

A recent study found a link between object-control skills in childhood and fitness in adolescence. A study published in the December issue of Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise put 276 elementary school kids in New South Wales, Australia, through movement skill tests. Three were related to object control (kicking, catching and overhand throwing), and four were focused on locomotor skills (hopping, side galloping, vertical jumping and sprinting). Six years later, 244 students had their cardio-respiratory fitness measured by running timed laps. Boys and girls who had good object-control skills (scores of 10 or more out of 15) ran, on average, six extra laps than those with poor object-control skills (scores of 5 or lower out of 15).

Researchers believe that object-control skills are often connected with participation in sports and other activities. Students who are good at these skills might be more likely to engage in recreational or organized sports, upping their fitness levels.



LOS ANGELES TIMES

Soccer builds object-control skills that later may contribute to overall fitness.

In the study they wrote, "Our findings suggest that object control skills should be targeted through school and community interventions as a key strategy in promoting subsequent cardio-

respiratory fitness. It is important that such skills are taught during the primary or elementary school years as children are at an optimal age in terms of motor skill learning."

Life & Style

Obama's true colors: Black, white...or neither?

By JESSE WASHINGTON
AP NATIONAL WRITER

A perplexing new chapter is unfolding in Barack Obama's racial saga: Many people insist that "the first black president" is actually not black.

Debate over whether to call this son of a white Kansan and a black Kenyan biracial, African-American, mixed-race, half-and-half, multiracial—or, in Obama's own words, a "mutt"—has reached a crescendo since Obama's election shattered assumptions about race.

Obama has said, "I identify as African-American—that's how I'm treated and that's how I'm viewed. I'm proud of it." In other words, the world gave Obama no choice but to be black, and he was happy to oblige.

But the world has changed since the young Obama found his place in it.

Intermarriage and the decline of racism are dissolving ancient definitions. The candidate Obama, in achieving what many thought impossible, was treated differently from previous black generations. And many white and mixed-race people now view President-elect Obama as something other than black.

So what now for racial categories born of a time when those from far-off lands were property rather than people, or enemy instead of family?

"They're falling apart," said Marty Favor, a Dart-

ON THE NET

<http://www.rebeccawalker.com>
<http://www.butterfield.house.gov>
<http://factfinder.census.gov>

mouth professor of African and African-American studies and author of the book "Authentic Blackness."

"In 1903, W.E.B. DuBois said the question of the 20th century is the question of the color line, which is a simplistic black-white thing," said Favor, who is biracial. "This is the moment in the 21st century when we're stepping across that."

Rebecca Walker, a 38-year-old writer with light brown skin who is of Russian, African, Irish, Scottish and Native American descent, said she used to identify herself as "human," which upset people of all backgrounds. So she went back to multiracial or biracial, "but only because there has yet to be a way of breaking through the need to racially identify and be identified by the culture at large."

"Of course Obama is black. And he's not black, too," Walker said. "He's white, and he's not white, too. Obama is whatever people project onto him ... he's a lot of things, and neither of them necessarily ex-

clude the other."

But U.S. Rep. G. K. Butterfield, a black man who by all appearances is white, feels differently.

Butterfield, 61, grew up in a prominent black family in Wilson, N.C. Both of his parents had white forebears, "and those genes came together to produce me." He grew up on the black side of town, led civil rights marches as a young man, and to this day goes out of his way to inform people that he is certainly not white.

Butterfield has made his choice; he says let Obama do the same.

"Obama has chosen the heritage he feels comfortable with," he said. "His physical appearance is black. I don't know how he could have chosen to be any other race. Let's just say he decided to be white—people would have laughed at him."

"You are a product of your experience. I'm a U.S. congressman, and I feel some degree of discomfort when I'm in an all-white group. We don't have the same view of the world, our experiences have been different."

The entire issue balances precariously on the "one-drop" rule, which sprang from the slaveowner habit of dropping by the slave quarters and producing brown babies. One drop of black blood meant that person, and his or her descendants, could never be a full citizen.

Today, the spectrum of skin tones among African-Americans—

even those with two black parents—is evidence of widespread white ancestry. Also, since blacks were often light enough to pass for white, unknown numbers of white Americans today have blacks hidden in their family trees.

One book, "Black People and their Place in World History," by Dr. Leroy Vaughn, even claims that five past presidents—Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, Abraham Lincoln, Warren Harding and Calvin Coolidge—had black ancestors, which would make Obama the sixth of his kind.

Mix in a few centuries' worth of Central, South and Native Americans, plus Asians, and untold millions of today's U.S. citizens need a DNA test to

decipher their true colors. The melting pot is working.

Yet the world has never been confronted with such powerful evidence as Obama. So as soon as he was elected, the seeds of confusion began putting down roots. "Let's not forget that he is not only the first African-American president, but the first biracial candidate. He was raised by

her family was a centerpiece of his campaign image-making) or baffled by the notion that someone would choose to be black instead of half-white.

"He can't be African-American. With race, white claims 50 percent of him and black 50 percent of him. Half a loaf is better than no loaf at all," Ron Wilson of Plantation, Fla.,

Linda Bob, a black schoolteacher from Eustis, Fla., said that calling Obama black when he was raised in a white family and none of his ancestors experienced slavery could cause some to ignore or forget the history of racial injustice.

"It just seems unfair to totally label him African-American without acknowledging that he was born to a white mother," she said. "It makes you feel like he doesn't have a class, a group."

There is at least one group eagerly waiting for Obama to embrace them. "To me, as to increasing numbers of mixed-race people, Barack Obama is not our first black president. He is our first biracial, bicultural president ... a bridge between races, a living symbol of tolerance, a signal that strict racial categories must go," Marie Arana wrote in the Washington Post.

He's a bridge between eras as well. The multiracial category "wasn't there when I was growing up," said John McWhorter, a 43-year-old fellow at the Manhattan Institute's Center for Race and Ethnicity, who is black. "In the '70s and the '80s, if somebody had one white parent and one black parent, the idea was they were black and had better get used to it and develop this black identity. That's now changing."

Latinos, whom the census identifies as an ethnic group and not a race, were not counted separately by the government until

the 1970s. After the 1990 census, many people complained that the four racial categories—white, black, Asian, and American Indian/Alaska native—did not fit them. The government then allowed people to check more than one box. (It also added a fifth category, for Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders.)

Six million people, or 2 percent of the population, now say they belong to more than one race, according to the most recent census figures. Another 19 million people, or 6 percent of the population, identify themselves as "some other race" than the five available choices.

The White House Office of Management and Budget, which oversees the census, specifically decided not to add a "multira-

cial" category, deeming it not a race in and of itself.

"We are in a transitional period" regarding these labels, McWhorter said. "I think that in only 20 years, the notion that there are white people and there are black people and anyone in between has some explaining to do and an identity to come up with, that will all seem very old-fashioned."

The debate over Obama's identity is just the latest step in a journey he unflinchingly chronicled in his memoir, "Dreams from My Father."

As a teenager, grappling with the social separation of his white classmates, "I had no idea who my own self was," Obama wrote.

In college in the 1970s, like millions of other dark-skinned Americans searching for self respect in a discriminatory nation, Obama found refuge in blackness. Classmates who sidestepped the label "black" in favor of "multiracial" chafed at Obama's newfound pride: "They avoided black people," he wrote. "It wasn't a matter of conscious choice, necessarily, just a matter of gravitational pull, the way integration always worked, a one-way street. The minority assimilated into the dominant culture, not the other way around."

Fast-forward 30 years, to the early stages of Obama's presidential campaign. Minorities are on track to outnumber whites, to redefine the dominant American culture. And the black political establishment, firmly rooted in the civil rights movement, questioned whether the outsider Obama was "black enough."

Then came the primary and general elections, when white voters were essential for victory. "Now I'm too black," Obama joked in July before an audience of minority journalists. "There is this sense of going back and forth depending on the time of day in terms of making assessments about my candidacy."

Today, it seems no single definition does justice to Obama—or to a nation where the revelation that Obama's eighth cousin is Dick Cheney, the white vice president from Wyoming, caused barely a ripple in the campaign.

In his memoir, Obama says he was deeply affected by reading that Malcolm X, the black nationalist-turned-humanist, once wished his white blood could be expunged.

"Traveling down the road to self-respect my own white blood would never recede into mere abstraction," Obama wrote. "I was left to wonder what else I would be severing if I left my mother and my grandparents at some uncharted border."



This 1960's file photo provided by the presidential campaign of Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill., shows Obama with his mother Stanley Ann Dunham. The Kansas-born mother, the Kenyan-born father, Barack Obama Sr., met at the University of Hawaii. They marriage, and Barack, "blessed" in Arabic, was born on Aug. 4, 1961.

a single white mother," a Fox News commentator said seven minutes after Obama was declared the winner.

"We do not have our first black president," the author Christopher Hitchens said on the BBC program "Newsnight." "He is not black. He is as black as he is white."

A Doonesbury comic strip that ran the day after the election showed several soldiers celebrating.

"He's half-white, you know," says a white soldier.

"You must be so proud," responds another.

Pride is the center of racial identity, and some white people seem insulted by a perception that Obama is rejecting his white mother (even though

wrote in a letter to the Sun-Sentinel newspaper.

Attempts to whiten Obama leave a bitter taste for many African-Americans, who feel that at their moment of triumph, the rules are being changed to steal what once was deemed worthless—blackness itself.

"For some people it's honestly confusion," said Favor, the Dartmouth professor. "For others it's a ploy to sort of reclaim the presidency for whiteness, as though Obama's blackness is somehow mitigated by being biracial."

Then there are the questions remaining from Obama's entry into national politics, when some blacks were leery of this Hawaiian-born newcomer who did not share their history.

Russian blonde named new Miss World

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (AP)—Russian blonde Kseniya Sukhinova was crowned the 58th Miss World Saturday after a two-hour spectacle in South Africa that combined elements of travelogue and reality show, and the kind of flag-waving usually seen at sports events.

Sukhinova beamed as she was crowned, and was composed and smiling moments afterward in a brief interview with The Associated Press. She said her immediate ambitions included meeting Russia's president, and that she planned to return soon to her studies at the Tyumen Oil and Gas University in her home region of northwestern Siberia.

"I am so happy to be here," she said of South Africa, which was hosting its sixth Miss World final. "I am so excited. It's amazing."

Sukhinova, who in a biography on the Miss World Web site listed becoming a super model as a goal, also had won the contest's top model award and was third in the swimsuit competition. She was a crowd favorite—though not as popular as hometown beauty Miss South Africa, Tansey Coetzee. Coetzee made the final five.

Second runner up was Miss Trinidad and Tobago, Gabrielle Walcott. First runner up was Miss India, Parvathy Omankuttan. Miss Angola, Brigitte Santos, completed the top five.



In addition to the swim suit and modeling segments, the 109 contestants competed in a "pentathlon" that included building a small boat and taking soccer penalty kicks; a talent show; and an event showcasing their charity work in the monthlong lead-up to Saturday's live international broadcast.

The contest was to have taken place in Ukraine, but was moved to South Africa because of tensions between Russia and Georgia and fears conflict could spread to Ukraine. South Africa has hosted more Miss World finals than any other country.

South Africa, often in the news for its high violent crime rate and questions about whether it will pull off hosting the 2010 soccer World Cup, made the most of the attention. The broadcast included clips of the contestants visiting game parks, golf courses and pristine beaches in South Africa and dancing in the famed Johannesburg township of Soweto. South Africans designed evening and beach wear and jewelry for the 109 contestants.

"I've experienced South African culture and everyday traditions," Sukhinova told the AP.

AP
Miss Russia Kseniya Sukhinova smiles after winning the Miss World contest in Johannesburg, South Africa, Saturday, Dec. 13, 2008.

Star and crescent joins Christmas tree, menorah

ARMONK, N.Y. (AP)—When they light the town Christmas tree in Armonk on Sunday, there will be a Jewish menorah right alongside, as usual. There will also be something new this year—an Islamic crescent and star.

And if there are any Buddhists or Hindus in town who want to see their symbols, the town is welcoming applications.

The holiday display, sponsored by the town of North Castle, which includes the village of Armonk, is among a growing number around the country that include the symbol for Islam.

"We've decided to go in the direction of being all-inclusive," said Reese Berman, supervisor of the town of 11,000, about 30 miles north of New York City and the site of IBM headquarters.

The star and crescent have been part of the national Christmas tree display in Washington for more than a decade. The symbol also is part of the display in Mineola on Long Island, which also features a Christmas tree, a menorah, a Nativity scene and a Kinara candleholder for Kwanzaa. And Wellesley, Mass., has had a star and crescent alongside its Christmas tree and menorah for several years.

Armonk's display is centered on a gazebo in a towering pine grove. One tree about 11 feet tall, strung with white lights, has been placed inside. A silver menorah is a few steps to the right of the cobblestone walk leading to the gazebo. The bright-white crescent and star are on 6-foot-high stanchions to the left.

Craig Mason, 63, a retired town resident who was walking past the display on a rainy morning last week, said he had no strong religious feelings but felt the display "says nice things about the people here, about how we welcome everyone."

He found the star and crescent symbol "very attractive in its simplicity."

Judy Wesley, director of the Armonk Chamber of Commerce, said she was raised Catholic and "in my opinion there's nothing wrong with having a spirit of inclusion. Jesus Christ himself would have gathered everyone around him."

However, Bill Donahue, president of the Catholic League for Civil and Religious Rights, said displaying a menorah and star-and-crescent—which he considers religious symbols—"shows tremendous sympathy for Jews and Muslims at the expense of the majority Christians" because he does not believe a Christmas tree is religious. He would favor adding a Nativity scene.

Christmas-season displays on public property have been controversial in recent years as courts have tried to balance free speech with church-state separation and wrestle with the issue of what is a religious symbol and what is secular.

Two years ago, nearby Briarcliff Manor canceled its tree-and-menorah display rather than add a Nativity scene a resident wanted to donate. Last year it put up a 6-foot-tall model of a dreidel, a spinning toy with Hebrew letters, trying to keep things secular.

Death on TV reveals a Swiss haven for suicides

SCHWERZENBACH, Switzerland (AP)—Twice a week, on average, in a nondescript building by the railroad tracks, a foreigner comes to die.

Most are terminally ill. Some are young and physically healthy except for a permanent disability or severe, debilitating mental disorder.

Drawn by Switzerland's reputation as a trouble-free place for foreigners to end their lives, more than 100 Germans, Britons, French, Americans and others come to this small commuter town just east of Zurich each year to lie down on a bed in an industrial park building and drink a lethal dose of barbiturates.

Now the country's suicide practices are under the spotlight after British TV last week showed Craig Ewert, a 59-year-old Chicago man with a severe form of motor neuron disease, killing himself in Switzerland two years ago.

Other countries, including the Netherlands, Belgium, and Oregon and Washington in the U.S., have recently passed laws allowing the incurably sick to seek out a doctor who—under tightly regulated circumstances—can hasten their death.

But only Switzerland, in a law dating back to 1942, permits foreigners to come and kill themselves, placing few restrictions on the how, when and why. Doctors have relative freedom to prescribe a veterinary drug for that very purpose.

Five minutes after drinking a glass of water laced with sodium pentobarbital, they fall asleep.

Death follows about half an hour later.

Like Ewert, most foreigners turn to Dignitas, one of several Swiss organizations dedicated to the cause. Dignitas' founder, Ludwig A. Minelli, has built the group into a thriving nonprofit operation.

Critics accuse it of turning Swit-

zerland into a magnet for so-called "suicide tourism," and of operating on the fringes of medical ethics and public opinion.

Dr. Bertrand Kiefer, editor-in-chief of the *Revue Medicale Suisse*, a medical journal, fears some people are killing themselves not to escape intolerable suffering but to relieve family or society of a burden.

Dignitas says its members' right to self-determination is paramount. The only criteria for assisting a suicide are that the person "suffers from an illness that inevitably leads to death, or from an unacceptable disability, and wants to end their life and suffer-

ing voluntarily."

Kiefer also says assisted-groups lack financial transparency.

Dignitas says it charges 10,000 Swiss francs (\$8,300) for its services, which include taking care of legal formalities and arranging consultations with a doctor willing to prescribe the deadly medicine. The group says it pays its staff salaries and invests any profit in its advocacy and counseling work, which includes suicide prevention efforts.

Other such organizations in Switzerland say they are cheaper and do not charge the patient directly, relying instead on membership fees and donations.

"We need to ensure that there's no

economic incentive for these organizations to encourage people to commit suicide," says Kiefer.

A small religious party is campaigning to ban groups from charging for their services—an idea which the pugnacious Minelli calls the product of "sick brains."

Officials in the canton of Zurich threatened to restrict their activities by making doctors see each patient more than once, and by limiting the supply of sodium pentobarbital. So some groups hoarded the drug and Dignitas turned to alternative methods, coming under scrutiny this spring after it was reported they were suffocating people with plastic bags and helium.

The bag is placed over the head of a person who then opens a flow of helium, falls into a coma and dies "in 99.9 percent of cases," according to Derek Humphry, a British author whose suicide manual "Final Exit" has sold at least a million copies.

The canton of Zurich examined the practice and found in May that the group had done nothing illegal. But the use of helium smacked to many Swiss of Nazi gas chambers, and made Minelli a tabloid hate figure—a sentiment widely shared in Schwerzenbach.

Like most Swiss, the townspeople support the principle of assisted suicide, but "the helium was the last straw," says Manfred Milz, who is evicting Dignitas from his building. It has to leave by June—its third move in two years. Dignitas previously used a private home, hotel rooms, even mobile homes.

But demand continues to grow, Dignitas says, and its membership has reached nearly 6,000 over the past decade. Some are merely supporters of its work, others intend to die with its help when the time comes.



AP
In this Dec. 5, 2008 photo is shown the veterinary drug sodium pentobarbital. Only Switzerland, in a law dating back to 1942, permits foreigners to come and kill themselves, placing few restrictions on the how, when and why.

Triple-threat Hugh Jackman shakes up Oscar format

LOS ANGELES (AP)—He sings, dances, acts on stage and screen, and he's the "Sexiest Man Alive." Hugh Jackman does everything but standup comedy—and that's why the first-time Oscars host fulfills the academy's promise to shake up the show in a way that's as tough to predict as the winners.

Jackman was announced Friday as the host of the 81st Academy Awards, a marked departure from the academy's standard of big-name comedians. Jon Stewart, who hosted in 2008 and 2006, and Ellen DeGeneres, the 2007 host, were the latest in a line of funny emcees since 1990. Billy Crystal did it eight times, Whoopi Goldberg took on four, Steve Martin did it twice and David Letterman and Chris Rock each had a shot.

As the parade of A-list comedians continued, ratings were in steady decline. But with new producers, a new director, new set designer and even a new music director, the academy has been hinting for months at an all-new look and feel for this year's Oscars telecast on Feb. 22.

Having Jackman host certainly fits with that theme.

Producers Laurence Mark and Bill Condon called the Australian actor "a consummate entertainer and an internationally renowned movie star."

"He also has style, elegance and a sense of occasion," Mark and Condon said in a joint statement. "Hugh is the ideal choice to host a celebration of the year's movies—and to have fun doing it."

Indeed, Jackman can be a mutant superhero (Wolverine from the "X-Men" movie franchise), a flirtatious singing barker (Billy Bigelow in Rodgers & Hammerstein's musical "Carousel"), a determined magician



Australians actors Nicole Kidman, left, and Hugh Jackman pose during a photo call to present their movie "Australia", in Rome, Thursday, Dec. 4, 2008.

("The Prestige") and a dancing penguin ("Happy Feet").

The 40-year-old actor plays a rough-

hewn cattle driver opposite Nicole Kidman's English aristocrat in the new Baz Luhrmann romantic adventure "Aus-

Judge jails man who offered Winehouse drugs

LONDON (AP)—A judge on Friday jailed a man who sold a newspaper footage that appeared to show Amy Winehouse taking drugs.

Johnny Blagrove and his girlfriend Cara Burton admitted offering to supply drugs, including cocaine and ecstasy, to the singer and other celebrities.

Judge Tudor Owen ordered Blagrove, 34, jailed for two years. Burton, 22, received two years' community service.

Prosecutors say the pair covertly filmed Winehouse at a party and sold the footage to The Sun newspaper for 50,000 pounds (\$75,000). In January the paper published the images, which appeared to show the singer smoking crack cocaine and snorting a substance from a card.

Detectives decided there was not enough evidence to charge Winehouse because it could not be proved what the substances were. But they charged the couple with offering to supply drugs.

Police who raided Blagrove and Burton's home found a list of celebrities they planned to film taking drugs, including Winehouse. The judge said there was no evidence they actually sold the singer drugs—a fact that saved them from longer sentences.

"Notwithstanding what is clearly visible in the video, there is no evidence of drugs being supplied or even used," he said.

In this Aug. 17, 2008 file photo, British singer Amy Winehouse performs at the V Festival in Chelmsford, Essex.



Actor Van Johnson, '40s heartthrob, dies at 92

NEW YORK (AP)—Van Johnson, whose boy-next-door wholesomeness made him a popular Hollywood star in the '40s and '50s with such films as "30 Seconds over Tokyo," "A Guy Named Joe" and "The Caine Mutiny," died Friday of natural causes. He was 92.

Johnson died at Tappan Zee Manor, an assisted living center in Nyack, N.Y., said Wendy Bleisweiss, a close friend.

With his tall, athletic build, handsome, freckled face and sunny personality, the red-haired Johnson starred op-

posite Esther Williams, June Allyson, Elizabeth Taylor and others during his two decades under contract to MGM.

He proved to be a versatile actor, equally at home with comedies ("The Bride Goes Wild," "Too Young to Kiss"), war movies ("Go for Broke," "Command Decision"), musicals ("Thrill of a Romance," "Brigadoon") and dramas ("State of the Union," "Madame Curie").

During the height of his popularity, Johnson was cast most often as the all-American boy. He played a real-life flier who lost a leg in a crash after the

bombing of Japan in "30 Seconds Over Tokyo." He was a writer in love with a wealthy American girl (Taylor) in "The Last Time I Saw Paris." He appeared as a post-Civil War farmer in "The Romance of Rosy Ridge."

More recently, he had a small role in 1985 as a movie actor in Woody Allen's "The Purple Rose of Cairo."

A heartthrob with bobbysoxers—he was called "the non-singing Sinatra"—Johnson married only once. In 1947 at the height of his career, he eloped to Juarez, Mexico, to marry Eve Wynn, who had divorced Johnson's good friend Keenan Wynn four hours before.



Johnson

tralia." Jackman was abroad promoting the film Friday when his Oscar role was announced.

"Thirty years ago when I was in Sydney watching Johnny Carson host the Oscars with my family, I never imagined that I'd one day have the chance to be up on that stage myself," he said in a statement. "I am very grateful to the Academy for giving me this opportunity. And, excited to be working with Larry and Bill on what I know will be a fun and memorable celebration."

Having an entertainer such as Jackman host the show necessitates a change in the well-established standard of opening the show with a jokes, said Steve Pond, author of the 2005 book "The Big Show: High Times and Dirty Dealings Backstage at the Academy Awards."

"The tricky part is that while he's charming, he's not the kind of guy to go out there and deliver a comic monologue at the top of the show," Pond said. "He's more comfortable with a song and dance, but is a song and dance at the top of the Oscars what people want to see? It'll be tricky adopting what he does best to

what works at the Oscars."

But with ratings dropping for all awards shows, it's worth shaking things up to generate interest—and the Academy Awards telecast, which posted its lowest ratings ever in February, isn't the only one trying something new.

The Emmys added a category—best reality-show host—and divvied the show's hosting duties among the five nominees. The results were disastrous: Critics panned the format and the show was one of the least-watched Emmys ever.

The Grammy Awards spiced up its nominations earlier this month by trading its typical staid press conference for a glitzy, live concert special. Ratings-wise, the hourlong show came in fourth among prime-time contenders, behind such dramas as NBC's "Life" and ABC's "Private Practice."

Bringing in Jackman to host the Academy Awards is "a stretch for the Oscars, but at this stage, it's worth taking the risk," Pond said. "He certainly has what it takes to do the gig if some changes are made in what that gig requires."

After-parties feel heat from meltdown and SAG threat

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The sleek shine of a designer gown, the gleam of a trophy, piles of gourmet food, a tipsy laugh. Award-show after-parties have always measured the glitz and glam of Hollywood, from the Golden Globes to the Grammys to the Oscars.

But this season, with the economy in shambles, entertainment jobs being slashed and the looming threat of a Screen Actors Guild strike, normally lavish parties are being scaled back or scrapped faster than certain starlets ditching the paparazzi.

With less bling, the words "appropriate" and "intimate" are being used more often to describe the suppressed soirees.

Oscar party planners are slicing guest lists and red carpets. Sony BMG's enormous annual Grammy after-party, which boasted 1,600 guests last season, has been canceled, said a Sony BMG spokeswoman. Label EMI has not yet announced its party plans, but last time the bash was limited only to artists, songwriters and managers, compared to past mega parties.

Meanwhile, there's cautious optimism among organizers of this season's Golden Globe parties, which were decimated last time by the Hollywood writers strike but are likely to re-emerge in the new year, albeit in a more subdued form.

"I think you're going to see everybody being more cost conscious. There's a line between glamorous and opulence that verges on the vulgar," said Craig Thompson, executive director of AIDS Project Los Angeles.

APLA's 8th annual Oscar viewing party and post-awards bash at West Hollywood's The Abbey will move forward on Feb. 22, said Thompson, but with the guest list sheared to 350 from last season's 650. And just in case of a SAG strike, cancellation clauses are in place on vendor contracts for up to two weeks before the event.

While last season's celebrity-studded celebration was held in a huge

tent strung with golden lights behind the restaurant, this February's APLA party will move into the restaurant, similar to earlier years.

"We're going to raise less and spend half as much," Thompson said. "We would have loved to have built off of this past year's growing success, but that would have been irresponsible in this economy and with fear of a strike."

Last season, InStyle Warner Bros., Fox Searchlight, E! Entertainment, HBO, NBC Universal-Focus Features and the Weinstein Co. all canceled their Golden Globe after-parties at the Beverly Hilton Hotel when the awards ceremony was downgraded to a press conference because of the writers strike.

SAG announced Wednesday, though, that it plans to count strike authorization votes nearly two weeks after the Globe Awards' Jan. 11 show but one month ahead of Oscar night.

HBO said its Globes party was going ahead at the Hilton's downstairs restaurant, Circa 55, and outdoor pool area, featuring a vintage '60s vibe. InStyle and NBC Universal said their parties were also moving forward as planned. But Kelly Striewski, a publicist who normally handles the annual E! Entertainment party, said E!, to her knowledge, was not doing its bash.

Vanity Fair canceled its top-tiered Oscar party last season in solidarity with the writers strike. However, it plans to hold a down-sized version this season at West Hollywood's smaller Sunset Tower Hotel instead of its traditional home at Morten's restaurant.

The A-list gathering, which in recent years has drawn the likes of Madonna, Jennifer Lopez and Al Gore, will be "a much more intimate affair than in years past," with a scaled-back guest list, according to editor Graydon Carter.

Vanity Fair publicist Beth Kseniak said that given the leaner times, the decor will be recycled from past years, with comfort food served.

Will Smith: It's all about helping others

MINNEAPOLIS (AP)—Will Smith is bringing the message of his new movie "Seven Pounds" to the Midwest with a promotional tour that also turned into a fundraiser.

In the film, which opens nationwide Friday, Smith portrays a suicidal man determined to change the lives of several strangers.

"If there's a message, it's 'you gotta help somebody.' Even if it's somebody's car breaking down, use your cell phone. Something little like that. We gotta help one another to get the quality of life we're all striving for," he said in an interview with the Star Tribune.

Smith's appearance Friday for a local premier at a theater in suburban Edina was also a fundraiser for Second Harvest Heartland, the state's largest

hunger-relief organization. Tickets were given to the first 250 people who donated non-perishable food. He and Vikings player Bernard Berrian also donated 300 holiday dinners to the organization.

"It's cool to have the goal of being the biggest movie star in the world. But why? It's been revealed to me that the question is: Whose life is better because you woke up today?"

Smith said he realized he had drifted out of contact with everyday people on Nov. 4.

"I sat there with my children and my 16-year-old son couldn't understand how I didn't know (the election) was over already. He was like 'You're out of touch,'" he said.

His promotional tour also includes stops in Miami, Dallas, St. Louis, Cleveland, Denver and Charlotte, N.C.



In this Dec. 9, 2008 file photo, actor Will Smith attends the premiere of "The Day The Earth Stood Still" in New York.

'American Pie' star Tara Reid checks into rehab

LOS ANGELES (AP)—A publicist says Tara Reid has checked herself into rehab. Jack Ketsoyan said Friday that the "American Pie" star went to the Promises Treatment Center. He did not specify what she was being treated for or when she entered the facility.

"We appreciate your respect to her and her family's privacy at this time," he said in a statement.

Reid, 33, earned a reputation as a drunken partier after famously being photographed on a red carpet with her breast exposed, apparently unaware that the strap of her dress had fallen off.

Her film credits include "Van Wilder" and "The Big Lebowski." She also hosted the short-lived, half-hour show "Tara-dise" on E!



Tara Reid is shown in this May file photo in Los Angeles.

Mark, his words. Twain speaks from beyond

NEW YORK (AP)—It only took a 100 years or so, but the world is finally getting a piece of Mark Twain's mind on the subject of free expression and whether it's safer for your words to be expressed after you're dead.

"We have charity for what the dead say. We may disapprove of what they say, but we do not insult them, we do not revile them, as knowing they cannot now defend themselves. If they should speak, what revelations there

would be!" Twain observed in "The Privilege of the Grave," an essay written in 1905, and long unpublished, that will appear in the issue of The New Yorker that comes out Monday.

"Now there is hardly one of us but would dearly like to reveal these secrets of ours; we know we cannot do it in life, then why not do it from the grave, and have the satisfaction of it?"

The essay is part of the Mark Twain archive at the University of California-Berkeley.

Celeb lunchboxes to benefit hunger relief

NEW YORK (AP)—Mario Batali is doing it. So are Gwyneth Paltrow and Salman Rushdie.

These and other celebrities from the culinary, entertainment and literary worlds are donating one-of-a-kind lunchboxes they designed to help raise money for the hungry.

The boxes are being sold online at <http://www.the-lunchboxauction.org> until midnight Thursday. Bidding starts at \$100.

Cameron Diaz, for example, offers a green concoction. One side depicts remnants of an environmental friendly lunch of whole foods and a metal fork on one side. The other side shows a wasteful lunch: paper, plastic fork and cup, and a juice box.

Each of the boxes is signed by the artist.

They will benefit Food Bank for New York City and The Lunchbox Fund, which provides lunch to impoverished schoolchildren in South Africa.

Report: Ex 'Idol' producer responds to Abdul

NEW YORK (AP)—Former "American Idol" producer Nigel Lythgoe has fired back at criticism by Paula Abdul that the show put her in peril by allowing an alleged stalker to audition.

Lythgoe says in an interview posted on People magazine's Web site: "You do not take somebody in that room that you believe is a danger to herself or a danger to Paula. That would not enter our heads."

Abdul, one of the "Idol" judges, claimed during an interview with Barbara Walters on her Sirius XM radio show that producers knew Paula Goodspeed had stalked her, and allowed her to audition anyway.

Goodspeed was found dead of an apparent suicide in a car near Abdul's Los Angeles home last month.

Lythgoe says he remembers Goodspeed as "a lovely girl" and "a great fan of Paula."



In this Sept. 5, 2008 file photo, TV Personality Paula Abdul attends the Conde Nast Media Group's Fifth Annual Fashion Rocks at Radio City Music Hall in New York.

Couple's boorish houseguest ruins chance of another stay

By **ABIGAIL VAN BUREN**
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE



DEAR ABBY: My husband and I have built and begun using a second home. We have entertained some wonderful houseguests here.

Last weekend, a couple of longtime friends, "Shirley" and "Arnold," came to stay for three days. They were the most miserable three days I can remember, mostly because of Arnold.

He dominated all conversation, expected all his food to be served to him—even though the dessert course was explicitly buffet-style—made noises while eating and never once offered to prepare any food.

The final straw came during the last night of their stay. Arnold came into the living room in his pajamas, lay down on the couch and, when he saw what we were already watching on TV, said, "I prefer the History Channel." I was so dumbfounded I could only laugh.

Needless to say, we are not planning to invite Arnold and Shirley back (which creates some other problems). What, if anything, should I say to this couple? And are there any books or other resources on "how to be a good houseguest" that I can send him anonymously?

DISTURBED IN THE DESERT

DEAR DISTURBED: Because Arnold and Shirley are "longtime friends," it is surprising that you hadn't noticed the husband's boorish behavior before. But sometimes you don't get to really know a person until after you have lived with him.

I do not recommend trying to educate this man on good manners at this late date. It is amazing how thin-skinned people with Arnold's lack of sensitivity for others can be. Nor should you send him any anonymous literature. He and his wife would know where it came from, so please don't sink to that level.

Sometimes silence speaks the loudest. Do not invite them again, and that will convey your message.

■■■

DEAR ABBY: My husband and I disagree about when to take down the Christmas decorations. I know there are some superstitions associated with leaving them up too long or taking them down too soon. Also, should the tree be taken down before or after the New Year?

WEARY ELVES IN TENNESSEE

DEAR WEARY ELVES: I am unaware of any superstitions concerning Christmas decorations. Many people leave their decorations (and trees) up if they are entertaining for New Year's Eve. However, common sense dictates that when the needles start falling and the tree shows signs of drying out, it should be disposed of so it doesn't become a fire hazard.

■■■

DEAR ABBY: My adult daughter, "Marsha," lives at home and will walk in and start a conversation or tell me something while I'm watching the news or some other show I'm interested in. Marsha never seems to arrive during commercials, which I'd gladly skip.

If I don't stop what I'm doing and pay full attention to her, she becomes offended. I feel she is interrupting. Who's right?

JAMES IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

DEAR JAMES: You are. However, a compromise might be to invest in a digital video recorder. That way you can "pause" whatever you're watching and return to it when interrupted. (It's also a godsend if you need to grab a snack or go to the bathroom.)

■■■

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

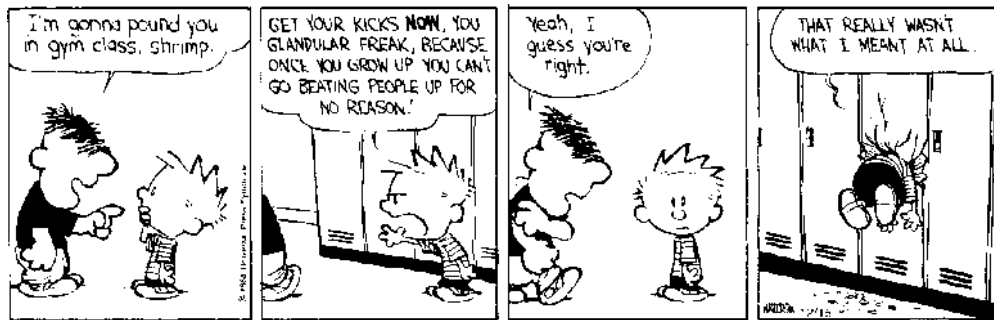
■■■

For an excellent guide to becoming a better conversationalist and a more attractive person, order "How to Be Popular." Send a business-size, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for \$6 (U.S. funds only) to: Dear Abby Popularity Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



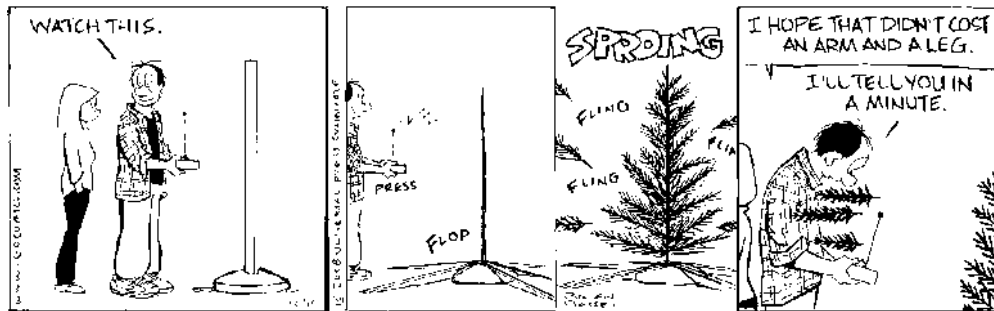
Garfield®

By Jim Davis



Adam@home

By Bryan Basset



The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Saxophone range

5 Nov. follower

8 Impale

12 Benefit

13 "— Yankee Doodle Dandy ..."

14 Ocean motion

15 Farmland measure

16 Ross and backup

18 Loose-leaf paper holder

20 Lucky dice rolls

21 Prison, in Port-mouth

23 Shriner's cap

24 2007 comedy movie

28 Nary a soul

31 — out a living

32 Le Pew and Le Moko

DOWN

1 Common rhyme scheme

2 Places decided

3 Un-

4 Nervous

5 Strips

6 Ostrich's cousin

7 Upper-casc

8 Spielberg or

9 Eastern or

10 Mideast gulf

11 Harry's first lady

17 Ump

19 O.K. Corral

22 Drink, as a puppy might

24 "— you!"

25 Guitar's island kin

26 Barrie boy

27 Trust

29 Greek consonants

30 Navy rank (Abbr.)

33 Agile

36 Tweaks

38 Anger ng

40 Yoko of music

42 Catch sight of

43 Hold the scepter

44 Despot

46 Exam format

47 Admonition to Nanette

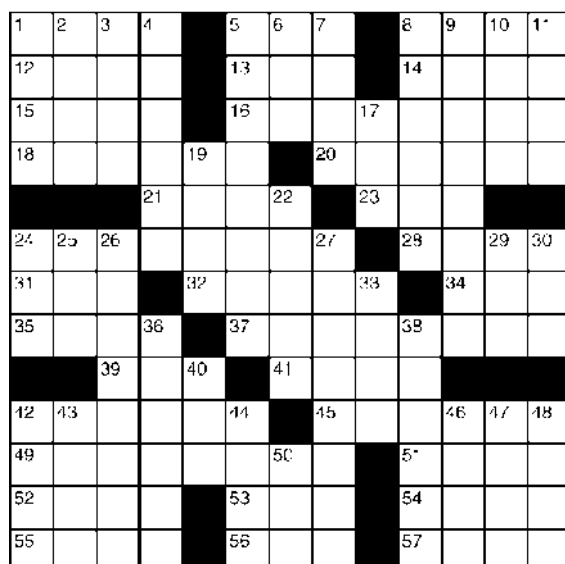
48 Winter forecast

50 Id counterpart

Solution time: 24 mins.

S	C	R	A	P	I	F	A	V	E	S
M	A	L	A	G	A	J	P	H	I	L
A	S	I	M	O	V	C	O	A	R	S
S	H	O	P	B	E	X	T	E	D	
A	B	C	R	O	S	I	O	T	A	
W	O	O	D	R	O	W	I	L	S	O
E	A	R	N	N	E	E	D	O	P	
O	H	O	A	D	J	S	A	R	I	
M	O	R	T	I	S	P	A	G	O	D
E	L	A	I	N	E	L	A	T	E	D
N	Y	L	O	N	S	A	P	N	E	A

Saturday's answer 12-15



STUMPED?

For answers to today's crossword, call 1-900-226-5955! \$99 per minute, touch-tone/relay phones. (18+ or y.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Garret Wang, 40; Helen Slater, 45; Nick Beggs, 47; Don Johnson, 59

Happy Birthday: You will have to make some adjustments this year where contracts, investments and health issues are concerned. Emotional matters will crop up regarding a loved one and finances. You can manipulate a situation that will allow you to change your lifestyle or direction. Take advantage of available opportunities. Your numbers are 3, 8, 19, 22, 31, 39, 42

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Get all your last-minute preparations taken care of so you can enjoy the closing of the year. You need ample time to reflect on the ups and downs of the year gone by and set yourself up for a better year ahead. ★★★★★

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): You may be tempted to overspend on your home and family, causing problems with someone who isn't in agreement. Talk things over before making a decision. Learn by observing someone with more experience. ★★

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Plan something special for entertainment and it will lead to love and romance. If something or someone has been dragging you down it may be time to move on. Travel, education and making new friends should be your intent. ★★★★★

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Put a push on what needs to be done before the year comes to a close. If you want to finish a deal, do it now. Don't mix love and money or you may suffer a loss. ★★

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): You'll be feeling emotional about the past and looking forward to the future. Love will be on the rise and picking up a gift for that special someone will ensure you make headway with your relationship in the future. ★★★

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Secrets will be hard to keep. Don't let changes going on at work or within an industry you are a part of cause you to make a poor choice. Ride out the storm but not without preparations for moving in a new direction if necessary. ★★★

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): You can position yourself for the future if you play your cards right today. Good times are heading your way—all you have to do is be in the right place at the right time. Love is in the stars and favors will be granted. ★★★★★

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Be very careful how you approach people today. Emotions will be close to the surface and problems can erupt out of nowhere. Don't expect to find out the lowdown or be privy to the truth. Don't make a move until you have all the facts. ★★

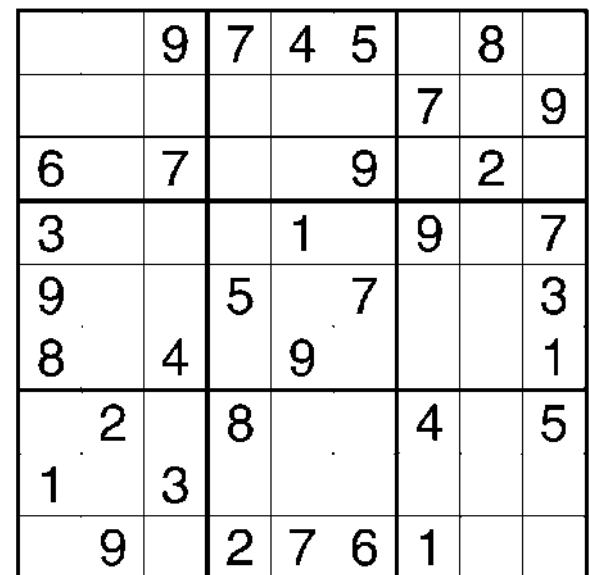
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Tie up business deals and make sure your money is positioned properly before the year ends. Legal matters, settlements and personal paperwork must be finalized quickly. Uncertainty about your future should not stop you from making decisions. ★★★★★

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Secure your position personally, professionally, financially and emotionally.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green



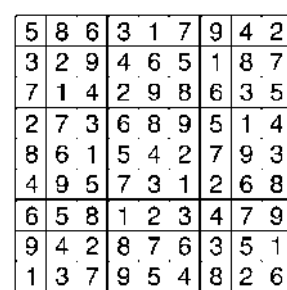
Difficulty Level ★

12/15

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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer



EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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This is not the time to leave things to chance. Be ruthless and shrewd in your pursuits. Strike while the iron is hot and few are looking. ★★★

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Passion, emotional talks and getting things cleared up so you can end the year on a high note should be top priorities. Have a game plan for making proper use of the opportunities that should come your way when Jupiter passes through the constellation Aquarius. ★★★

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Like it or not, change is upon you. Face the past so you can move into the new year optimistically. By standing up to whatever and whoever you have had differences with, you will show your strength, courage and determination. ★★★

Birthday Baby: You are outgoing and energetic and put a positive spin on whatever you do. You are adaptable and dramatic and will push for what you want.

Eugenia's Web sites: astroadvice.com for fun, eugenialast.com for confidential consultations

WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD. The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

MADE IN KOREA

Solution: 6 letters



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12/15

As an, Assembly, Brand, Cameras, Cheap, Chemicals, Competitive, Components, Cost, Design, Devices, Digital, Economy, Electronics, Gadgets, Global, Goods, Label, Labor, Machines, Market, Meta, Motors, North, Overseas, Parts, Price, Printers, Products, Resources, Robots, Sae, Shops, Shop, South, Suppliers, Teas, Test, Time, Toys, Trade, Value.

Last Saturday's Answer: Classic

CLASSIFIED ADS



WANTED TO LEASE

Looking for a fenced house with less \$500/month rent. Please contact: 285-3999 or dshong8@hotmail.com (except Kageman and Capital Hill areas)

WHATZIT?™

Find the familiar phrase, saying or name in this arrangement of letters.

WASTE REEF WANT HITCH

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Find today's solution in this section

FOR RENT - RESIDENTIAL

Fina Sisu Apt., 2-BR, FF, AC, 24-hr pwr./water, security, laundry room, free Wi-Fi & ample parking. MIHA applicants accepted. Right behind NMC campus. Special rates for NMC faculty/ students. Call 235-6527/8 or 285-1317 for info.

For rent: Unfurnished 2 bedrooms, 2 full baths, spacious yard with remote-entry. Completely enclosed for privacy. This must see house is near Kagman High School. Cha-Cha Jr. High and the LauLau Golf Course. \$1,200 or best acceptable offer with security deposit. Contact #322-0922.



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• 5-Liner	\$35
• 3-Liner with picture	\$45
• 5-Liner with picture	\$55

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Classified Ads

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- *Saipan Tribune*: All ads placed Friday before 12 noon will come out Saturday issue and anything placed thereafter will be published on either Sunday or Monday issues.

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Classified Ads

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REFUNDS

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No refunds will be made once ad is already printed.

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Saipan Tribune will not be responsible for errors after the first day of publication. Errors should be called in before noon of the issue date. *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

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All advertising in the *Saipan Tribune* are subject to applicable rate sheet, copies of which are available from the Advertising Sales Department (please call 235-8747, 235-2769 or 235-6397). All ads will be subject to approval prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit, refuse, reject or cancel any ad at any time. Also, *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

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www.saipantribune.com

Wood, Indians reach \$20.5 million, 2-year deal



CLEVELAND (AP)—Kerry Wood wasn't concerned the Cleveland Indians would find a red flag in his massive medical records.

He was certain the elbow X-rays, MRI results on his shoulder and confidential documents would meet approval, clearing him to sign his first free-agent contract.

"With what I've gone through and what I've come back from, there was no doubt in my mind," Wood said. "I was just worried they would need a dolly or two to get it over to them."

"You play for 10 years and a lot can happen."

Wood would know.

The former Cubs right-hander, who has revived his injury-riddled career as a reliever, finalized a \$20.5 million, two-year deal on Saturday with the Indians, whose high expectations in 2008 crashed in a succession of early season blown saves by an underachieving and unpredictable bullpen.

In 10 years, Wood, who saved 34 games in his first season finishing for

Chicago, has gone from rising star to a question mark, from the front of the rotation to the back of the bullpen, and now from one league to the other.

The closer is starting over.

The 31-year-old gets \$10 million next year and \$10.5 million in 2010. An \$11 million option kicks in if Wood has 55 games finished in either of the next two years.

Cleveland's investment is being viewed by some as risky. After all, Wood has been on the disabled list 12 times. But his only visit last season was for a blister on his right index finger, and the Indians are confident they're making a sound move after scouting Wood and giving him a physical.

"Not only did he hold up for the season, but he was able to pitch three days in a row multiple times," Indians general manager Mark Shapiro said. "He was dominant as he as ever been in his career."

After pitching in 22 games as a setup man in 2007, Wood went to spring training and won the closer's job - vacated when the Cubs made Ryan Dempster a

starter - over Carlos Marmol and Bob Howry. He went 5-4 with a 3.26 ERA and made the All-Star team.

But he fell out of Chicago's plans this winter, when the Cubs acquired reliever Kevin Gregg from Florida as a setup man and moved Marmol to closer. Wood has no resentment toward the team that gave him his pro start by drafting the 6-foot-5 Texan in 1995.

"I understand it," Wood said. "That's part of the game and it's time to move on."

Moving into the closer's role seemed to suit the hard-throwing Wood, who can still pump his fastball into the mid-90s. He now has a nasty curve to go with it. He said the adjustment to closing took him only three weeks, a transition made easier because of his background as a power pitcher.

"I could come in and let it go," he said from his home in Arizona. "The thing I impressed myself with was the walks and command. My command was a lot better coming in for a short time."

Wood's statistics back that up. He

struck out 84 batters and walked just 18 in 66 1-3 innings over 65 appearances.

More importantly, Wood felt as if his arm had been reborn.

"I've talked to relievers who said they felt better the morning after they throw," Wood said. "I could never un-

derstand that, as a starter. Because it would take me every bit of four days to be able to go again. After making the transition and coming out of the bullpen, I saw there's a lot of validity to it. The more I threw, the better I felt and the better I did."

Top-ranked Tar Heels beat Oral Roberts, 100-84



CHAPEL HILL, N.C. (AP)—Tyler Hansbrough had 26 points and nine rebounds to help top-ranked North Carolina beat Oral Roberts 100-84 on Saturday.

Deon Thompson added 22 points for the Tar Heels (9-0), who had no trouble in their first game following a 10-day exam break. North Carolina shot 59 percent to take a 20-point halftime lead and was never seriously threatened from there in yet another lopsided victory to start the season.

Robert Jarvis scored 26 points for the Golden Eagles (2-7), who were playing a No. 1-ranked team for the first time.

Hansbrough was playing his first game at the Smith Center this season. He sat out the first two against Pennsylvania and Kentucky as he recovered from a preseason shin injury, then missed the North Carolina-Asheville game as he recovered from a bruised ankle before the Michigan State game.

He looked right at home, hitting his first five shots on the way to 15 first-half points. He is nine points from breaking the school's career scoring record owned by Phil Ford - which has stood for three decades - and could break it Thursday night when North Carolina hosts Evansville.

He wasn't alone in tormenting the Golden Eagles. Thompson finished 10-for-12 from the field, burying both soft turnaround jumpers and tough stickbacks inside to give the Tar Heels an unstoppable frontline. Meanwhile, Ty Lawson continued his strong play with 18 points, seven assists and two turnovers.

Hansbrough had a stretch of seven straight points to push the Tar Heels up 27-14 midway through the first half, a lead North Carolina would not let slip below double digits. Still, while they cracked the 100-point mark for the fourth time this season, the Tar Heels didn't put together the kind of crowd-pleasing stretch to put the game away.

In fact, Oral Roberts hovered as close as 73-59 on a 3-pointer by Kyron Stokes with 10:41 to play and outscored North Carolina in the second half. But the Tar Heels kept attacking the basket in their fast-paced offense to stay out in front while Hansbrough inched closer to Ford's record.

He ended Saturday's pursuit with a three-point play followed by two free throws before leaving the game to cheers with 4:24 left and North Carolina ahead 92-71.

North Carolina senior Danny Green, who had 12 points, left the game with a cut over his right eye after a collision with about 6 minutes left.



AP

This is an Aug. 31, 2007 file photo showing Chicago Cubs pitcher Kerry Wood delivering a pitch against the Houston Astros during the seventh inning of a baseball game in Chicago. Wood was in Cleveland on Wednesday night Dec. 10, 2008 to take the physical needed before he can finalize a two-year deal with the Indians worth about \$20 million. Wood had 34 saves last season for Chicago Cubs.



NFL BRIEFS

Cowboys deny reports of locker room rift

IRVING, Texas (AP)—Wade Phillips insisted there are no rifts in his locker room, Jerry Jones dismissed rumors of inner turmoil, and Roy Williams wore a Santa hat but hardly sounded merry. This is how the Dallas Cowboys made their case Friday that everything is just fine at Valley Ranch. Before a pivotal game Sunday night against the NFC-leading New York Giants, the Cowboys fended off questions about divisive secret meetings, an unhappy Terrell Owens and cornerback Terence Newman's frank comments about accountability. "I am not worried about a divided locker room," Phillips said.

Frerotte doubtful against Cardinals

EDEN PRAIRIE, Minn. (AP)—Minnesota quarterback Gus Frerotte is listed as doubtful for the Vikings'

Sunday against Arizona with a lower back injury. That means backup Tarvaris Jackson likely will start against the Cardinals as the Vikings look to stay a game ahead of Chicago in the NFC North. Coach Brad Childress says Frerotte is improving and will continue to be evaluated on Saturday and Sunday. "He's gotten incrementally better," Childress said. "It's not a leaps and bounds thing."

Bucs QB Garcia questionable for Sunday

TAMPA, Fla. (AP)—Tampa Bay quarterback Jeff Garcia was limited during practice Friday because of a right calf strain and is listed as questionable for Sunday's game at Atlanta. Coach Jon Gruden said he was optimistic that Garcia, who missed part of training camp with a similar injury, will be able to play. If he doesn't, the Buccaneers likely would turn to Luke

McCown or Brian Griese. Gruden didn't sound overly concerned that Garcia has been limited in practice this week.

Patriots still mum on Cassel

SAN JOSE, Calif. (AP)—New England quarterback Matt Cassel practiced for a second straight day following the death of his father earlier this week. But the Patriots declined to say whether he'll play against Oakland on Sunday. Coach Bill Belichick addressed the media briefly before Friday's practice at San Jose State and wouldn't describe Cassel's playing status. "We'll do our thing after practice and let you know," Belichick said. Cassel briefly left the team on Wednesday after his father, Greg, died Monday night in the Los Angeles area. Cassel was notified of his father's passing on Tuesday, but stayed with the team before flying to Southern California to be with his family.



AP

North Carolina's Tyler Hansbrough, top, and Oral Roberts' Marcus Lewis battle for the ball during the first half of an NCAA college men's basketball game in Chapel Hill, N.C., Saturday, Dec. 13, 2008.

Hawks snap Cavaliers' winning streak



ATLANTA (AP)—Mike Bibby scored 24 points, Marvin Williams hit the clinching free throws, and the Atlanta Hawks snapped the Cleveland Cavaliers' 11-game winning streak with a 97-92 victory Saturday night.

LeBron James had 33 points and nine assists for the Cavs, who overcame a 14-point deficit in the third quarter to take a 70-68 lead early in the fourth on Mo Williams' layup.

Williams finished with 26 points for the Cavs, who were trying for the first 12-game winning streak in franchise history, having won 11 in a row four times.

76ers 104, Wizards 89

In Philadelphia, Elton Brand scored a season-high 27 points, leading Philadelphia over struggling Washington in Tony DiLeo's coaching debut.

Lou Williams added 15 points, Thaddeus Young and Andre Iguodala each had 14, and Willie Green scored 13 for the Sixers, who snapped a three-game losing streak and improved to 10-14.

Maurice Cheeks didn't receive that type of balance on a consistent basis and was subsequently fired earlier Saturday as coach of the Sixers, who were slumping badly a season after making the playoffs. DiLeo, the team's assistant general manager, was appointed coach for rest of the season.

Antawn Jamison scored 17 points, Mike James and DeShawn Stevenson added 16 apiece and Caron Butler had 15 for the last-place Wizards (4-17), who are 1-8 on the road.

Pistons 90, Bobcats 86

In Charlotte, North Carolina, Allen Iver-



Atlanta Hawks guard Mike Bibby, center, is swarmed by Cleveland Cavaliers forward Anderson Varejao, of Brazil, and guard Mo Williams (2) as they pressure him for the ball during the first half of an NBA basketball game, Saturday, Dec. 13, 2008, in Atlanta.

son scored 20 points, Rasheed Wallace hit a 3-pointer with 10.4 seconds left to avoid an embarrassing collapse, and Detroit held off new-look Charlotte.

Richard Hamilton added 18 points, while Rodney Stuckey had 13 points and 10 assists for the Pistons, who won their second straight game with their

new, smaller lineup despite being outscored 30-12 in the fourth quarter.

Boris Diaw managed seven points and nine rebounds on 3-of-10 shooting in the Bobcats' sixth straight loss. Raja Bell had four points and missed seven of nine shots in the duo's Charlotte debuts, three days after they were acquired from Phoenix for Bobcats top scorer Jason Richardson and Jared Dudley.

Magic 103, Jazz 94

In Salt Lake City, Rashard Lewis scored 27 points, and Orlando beat Utah despite playing without injured center Dwight Howard for the first time.

Howard missed the first game of his career because of a left knee injury sustained in Friday's loss at Phoenix. He had played in all 351 games since being drafted No. 1 overall in 2004.

Orlando (18-6) also got 23 points from Hedo Turkoglu to improve to 9-3 on the road this season.

Andrei Kirilenko and Deron Williams each scored 17 points for Utah, which committed 22 turnovers, its second-highest total of the season.

Mavericks 103, Thunder 99

In Dallas, Dirk Nowitzki scored a season-high 46 points, Jason Terry added 28 and Dallas won for the 11th time in 13 games, beating Oklahoma City.

Oklahoma City (2-22) has the worst record in the NBA and dropped its sixth straight despite leading most of the game.

Jeff Green scored 25 points and Kevin Durant added 22, but none in the fourth quarter. Rookie Russell Westbrook chipped in with 19 points and eight rebounds for the Thunder, who are 1-11 on the road.

Nuggets 123, Warriors 105

In Denver, Carmelo Anthony had 27 points and nine rebounds, Chauncey Billups added 16 points and 11 assists, and Denver beat Golden State.

Kenyon Martin, who returned to the lineup after missing two games with a sprained left wrist, had 15 points for the Nuggets, who had six players score in double figures.

Jamal Crawford had 25 points and Rob Kurz had 20 points and seven rebounds for the Warriors, who have lost 11 of their last 13.

Bulls 113, Nets 104

In Chicago, Ben Gordon scored 29 points and Derrick Rose had nine of his 22 in the fourth quarter to lead Chicago over New Jersey.

One night after going 0-for-13 against Toronto in the worst shooting performance of his career, Vince Carter bounced back with 39 points on 11-for-22 from the field. He dunked on New Jersey's first possession and beat the buzzer at the end of the first half with a halfcourt shot, but the Nets lost their third straight.

Tyrus Thomas scored 16 points and Drew Gooden added 14 for the Bulls, who improved to 8-3 at home.

Bucks 121, Pacers 103

In Milwaukee, Michael Redd scored 27 points, Andrew Bogut had 20 points and 20 rebounds, and Milwaukee blew a 21-point, second-half lead before scoring the game's final 19 points to beat Indiana.

Charlie Villanueva added 26 points, 24 in the first half, to equal a season high and help the Bucks snap a three-game losing streak.

T.J. Ford had a season-high 27 points for Indiana, which dropped its sixth straight and eighth of nine.

Slumping 76ers fire Cheeks

PHILADELPHIA (AP)—The 76ers signed Elton Brand and Andre Iguodala to \$80 million deals in the offseason and gave another \$25 million to Louis Williams because they believed they could contend in the East.

When the blossoming Sixers nucleus stumbled to start the season, it was Maurice Cheeks who paid the price.

Cheeks was fired Saturday in his fourth year as coach of the Sixers, who are slumping at 9-14 a season after making the playoffs. Assistant general manager Tony DiLeo was appointed coach for rest of 2008-09.

The dismissal came hours before the 76ers were to play at home, with DiLeo making his coaching debut against Washington.

The hasty move caught the Sixers by surprise.

"They want to win and win now," Brand said.

Team president Ed Stefanski said he fired Cheeks because the 76ers were not successfully running the fast-break, up-tempo style of play they used at the end of last season to make the playoffs.

The Sixers' slogan is "Run With Us." When they couldn't, Cheeks was run out of town.

"I felt we were not progressing the way we had wanted to progress," Stefanski said. "I didn't feel on the floor

we were executing the philosophy we wanted to have as Sixers basketball."

Cheeks became the fifth NBA coach fired this season following P.J. Carlesimo (Oklahoma City), Eddie Jordan (Washington), Sam Mitchell (Toronto) and Randy Wittman (Minnesota).

Cheeks was one of the most popular players in 76ers history and led them to the NBA title in 1983. He was part of Larry Brown's staff when the Sixers went to the NBA finals in 2001 and, after a head coaching stint at Portland, returned to Philadelphia in 2005.

He never had a winning record (122-152) in three-plus seasons and the Sixers were eliminated last season in the first round by Detroit. After an 18-30 start, Philadelphia won 18 of its next 23 games and wound up at 40-42, the seventh seed in the Eastern Conference.

The strong finish and Brand's free-agent acquisition sent expectations soaring in Philadelphia. The 76ers anticipated a deep run in the playoffs this season.

Stefanski rewarded Cheeks with two contract extensions in seven months that would have taken him to the end of next season. Instead, with the team on a three-game losing streak and last in the Atlantic Division, he didn't even last until the end of the calendar year. The Sixers have lost eight of 10 enter-



In this Oct. 14, 2008, file photo, Philadelphia 76ers coach Maurice Cheeks signals to his players during an NBA basketball game against the New York Knicks at Madison Square Garden in New York.

ing Saturday.

"I knew something would happen

because of the high expectations, but I didn't think it would happen that fast," Brand said.

A message left on Cheeks' cell phone was not immediately returned.

"It takes time and I'm sad, because he did a phenomenal job last year," Brown said.

The Sixers made a surprise choice skipping assistants like Jim Lynam for DiLeo, a New Jersey native who played at La Salle. He played and coached in West Germany for 10 seasons before joining the Sixers in 1990-91. He had a brief stint as an assistant in the early '90s, but hasn't been in an NBA huddle in more than a decade.

"Once you're a coach, you're always a coach. That doesn't concern me at all," said chairman Ed Snider.

There were a smattering of boos when DiLeo was introduced before the Washington game.

DiLeo was promoted to senior vice president/assistant general manager in 2003 and has been a steady presence at practices.

He believes if the Sixers can stretch that fun and fast-breaking style over the rest of the season, they can race up the Eastern Conference standings.

"I have seen flashes, quarters or halves of this, but we have to do it more consistently," DiLeo said. "We want to play at more of an up-tempo pace."

Brand's arrival has been a popular target for their slide this season. His

numbers (15.9 points, 10 rebounds) are off his career averages, and the Sixers play slower when he's on the court. Iguodala hasn't adjusted making the move from small forward to 2 guard, Samuel Dalembert has struggled on the weakside and seen his numbers drop, and the Sixers still don't have a legitimate 3-point threat.

"Elton can fit into a running game," DiLeo said. "He's a perfect trailer. He can catch, he can shoot, he can put it on the floor. ... If you're looking for an ideal trailer, he's an ideal trailer."

Cheeks played 15 seasons in the NBA, the first 11 with Philadelphia, and retired in 1993. An outstanding defensive player, Cheeks played in four All-Star games and his No. 10 jersey hangs in the rafters.

At the press conference to announce his hiring, former Sixers guard Allen Iverson said, "If you got a problem with Mo Cheeks, there must be something wrong with you." Iverson—who has feuded with many of his coaches—would have a bitter falling out with Cheeks and was eventually traded to Denver. The 1-2 combination of Iverson and Chris Webber also was a bust in Cheeks' first season.

They're all gone and now so is Cheeks.

"I believe in this team, we are better than this and we are going to make it better," Stefanski said. "We will find a way to improve on this team."

Minor takes doubles crown in New Zealand

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER



CNMI junior tennis player Thea Minor celebrated her birthday in New Zealand with two finals appearances and a championship win.

Minor, who turned 13 on Thursday, and fellow CNMI bet Rafael Jones and Christian Miller are part of the ITF Pacific Oceania Touring Team and competed in the 2008 Coca-Cola Waikato Junior Open, which ran from Dec. 7 to 13 in Hamilton East, Hamilton, New Zealand.

It was Minor's second tour of duty for the team and she made a pretty impressive start in her return to New Zealand.

She and ITF Pacific Oceania teammate Tarani Kamoa ruled the girls' 14 doubles division after beating fellow Pacific Oceania

bet Annie Shannon and Waikato's Toni Katipa in the finals, 6-3, 6-1.

Minor and Kamoe, who were seeded second in the event, debuted with a big 6-0, 6-0 win over Waikato's Amelie Hamilton and Australia's Telese Lane, and advanced to the finals after downing Waikato's Libby Bird and New Caledonia's Samuelle Bull in the semis, 6-2, 6-0.

Minor and Kamoa also made it to the girls' 16 doubles finals, but they lost to No. 2 seed Kerry Hampton and Ellie Verran of New Zealand in the finals, 2-6, 2-6.

Both finalists played extended minutes in the semis with the tandem of Minor and Kamoe downing Australia's Elise Facci and Brianna Kotovski, 9-6, and the pair of Hampyon-Verran topping Bull and Ophelle Salaun.

Minor played in two singles competitions.

In the girls' 14 singles, the Grace Christian Academy student advanced to the Round of



ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Thea Minor, left, is joined by teammate Rafael Jones and Christian Miller at the departure area of the Francisco C. Ada International Airport. The three CNMI beters are in New Zealand to compete in three tournaments.

16 winning over New Zealand's Caitlin Edwards, 6-4, 6-1, before bowing to Ella Hassall in the quarterfinals, 5-7, 1-6.

In the girls' 16 singles, Minor also gained Round of 16 entry after beating Australia's Joanna Degan before losing to Facci,

6-7, 2-6.

Jones and Miller won their debuts in the boys' 14 singles downing Australia's Jonas Rundqvist, 6-3, 6-4, and New Zealand's Lochain Robertson, 6-0, 6-0, respectively.

Jones marched on to the

Round of 32 after easing past New Zealand's Lane Fisher, 6-2, 6-2, while Miller lost to No. 9 seed Sam Shearer of Australia in the next round, 2-6, 4-6.

Jones went on to face Shearer in the Round of 16 with the Aussie bet outclassing the CNMI netter, 6-1, 6-0.

In the boys' 14 doubles, Jones teamed up with Fiji's Kevin Khatri and they advanced to the Round of 32 after thumping the Aussie pair of Henry Moore and Mitchell Nixon, 6-4, 6-3. But Jones and Khatri bowed to New Zealand's John Curwen and Logan Walsh in the Round of 16 in three hard fought sets, 6-7, 6-1, 7-6 (10-5).

Miller was paired with Robin Morove and they also won their first match against Australia's Samuel Heath and James Monaghan, 6-4, 6-0, before losing to Matthew Sheedy and Sion Wiggins, 1-6, 0-6.

Jones completed her stint in

the Waikato event with a participation in the boys' 16 doubles teaming up with Khatri anew, but they lost their debut against New Zealand's TeHira Baker and Campbell Brake, 1-6, 5-7.

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	22	2	.917	—
New Jersey	11	11	.500	10
New York	11	12	.478	10 1/2
Toronto	10	12	.455	11
Philadelphia	10	14	.417	12

Southeast Division

Orlando	18	6	.750	—
Atlanta	14	9	.609	3 1/2
Miami	12	10	.545	5
Charlotte	7	17	.292	11
Washington	4	17	.190	12 1/2

Central Division

Cleveland	20	4	.833	—
Detroit	13	9	.591	6
Chicago	11	12	.478	8 1/2
Milwaukee	10	15	.400	10 1/2
Indiana	7	16	.304	12 1/2

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

San Antonio	14	8	.636	—
New Orleans	12	7	.632	1/2
Houston	15	9	.625	—
Dallas	13	9	.591	1
Memphis	8	15	.348	6 1/2

Northwest Division

Denver	16	7	.696	—
Portland	15	10	.600	2
Utah	15	10	.600	2
Minnesota	4	18	.182	11 1/2
Oklahoma City	2	22	.083	14 1/2

Pacific Division

L.A. Lakers	19	3	.864	—
Phoenix	14	10	.583	6
Golden State	7	17	.292	13
L.A. Clippers	17	26	.13	1/2
Sacramento	6	18	.250	14

Friday's Games

Toronto	101, New Jersey	79
Atlanta	87, Miami	73
Cleveland	88, Philadelphia	72
Memphis	103, Chicago	96
Detroit	114, Indiana	110
Boston	94, New Orleans	82
San Antonio	98, Minnesota	86
Phoenix	113, Orlando	112
L.A. Clippers	120, Portland	112OT
Houston	119, Golden State	108
L.A. Lakers	112, Sacramento	103

Saturday's Games

Detroit	90, Charlotte	86
Atlanta	97, Cleveland	92
Philadelphia	104, Washington	89
Dallas	103, Oklahoma City	99
Chicago	113, New Jersey	104
Milwaukee	121, Indiana	103
Denver	123, Golden State	105
Orlando	103, Utah	94
New York	114, Sacramento	90
L.A. Clippers	95, Houston	82

By The Associated Press

LOCAL SCORES

BUDWEISER SOFTBALL STANDINGS

Men's Division

DCCA	7	0
CPA	6	0
Freedom Air	5	1
Joeten Motors	5	1
No Zone	5	2
Beach Boys	4	1
Legislature	4	2
DLNR	4	3
POI	3	2
P & S	3	3
Docomo	3	4
Law & Order	3	4
Customs	2	4
PSS	2	4
DEQ/CRM	2	5
PIC	1	4
CHC	1	4
CUC	2	5
Hopwood	0	6
Mayors	0	7

Women's Division

NMC	5	0
DCCA	3	2
Finance	2	3
CHC	1	3
CUC	1	4

No Zone stops Freedom Air's run in softball league

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER



Freedom Air's string of wins ended at five following No Zone's 17-6 triumph in their game Thursday night in the 2008 Inter Government/Business Softball League at the Capital Hill Ballfield.

Shortstop Jerry Ayuyu led No Zone's impressive win over Freedom Air making a grand slam in the fifth inning and going 3-for-5 at-bat. Ayuyu scored four runs, one double and six RBIs.

No Zone was off to good start with pitcher Carl Hocog connecting on a two-run single. No Zone scored three more runs at the top of the first on Freedom Air's errors.

Freedom Air did not score in the first inning, made two runs in the second, and had another two in the third with Roy Celis' homer bringing Dante Sablan home.

Celis' roundtripper failed to spark a Freedom Air rally, as it had only one run in the fourth.

After four complete innings, No Zone was ahead by seven, 12-5, and increased the lead to 11 with a five-run top of the

fifth highlighted by Ayuyu's grand slam.

A solo homer from Reno Celis was Freedom Air's only answer to Ayuyu's grand slam at the bottom of the fifth allowing No Zone to improve to a 5-2 record.

DCCA 21, Docomo 10

In other results, defending champion Department of Community and Cultural Affairs stretches its winning streak to seven after downing Docomo, 21-10.

DCCA is still on top of the 20-team field with its 7-0 record, a win ahead of Commonwealth

Ports Authority.

Docomo dropped to a 3-5 record.

Centerfielder Julian Camacho made two homers for DCCA and was 4-for-4 at the plate. He had five RBIs.

Docomo was still leading, 9-5, after three innings, when DCCA found its targets in the last two innings drilling eight runs apiece in the fourth and fifth, while allowing its foe to only one run in the last two innings. Tyrone Omar scored Docomo's last run on a John Acosta single at the bottom of the fourth.

BACK-TO-BACK

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markers, tallying 11 in the fourth. Villanueva chipped

OKLAHOMA

From Page 28

Archie Griffin as the only two-time winners.

Bradford and Tebow will soon meet again, when the No. 2 Sooners (12-1) face No. 1 Gators (12-1) in Miami.

"We're ready to get back to work to get ready for the 8th," Bradford said. "When we started this season, winning the national championship was the first goal we put down as a team."

Next month's game between Oklahoma and Florida marks the second time Heisman win-

in 17.

Mettao paced Kagman with 15 points making 11 in the third period. But Mettao was limited to two points in the fourth, as he was forced to sit

ners will play against each other. The first was in the 2005 Orange Bowl, when '04 winner Matt Leinart and Southern California beat '03 winner Jason White and Oklahoma for the national title.

Bradford, who leads the nation in touchdown passes with 48, received 1,726 points. Texas quarterback Colt McCoy was second with 1,604 and Tebow—who received the most first-place votes—was third with 1,575 points.

"I was definitely surprised and I think it's everything I imagined," said Bradford, who raised the 25-pound bronze

statue with his left hand still in a cast from a recent surgery. "I think it will take a couple weeks to set in."

Bradford got 300 first-place votes, McCoy 266 and Tebow 309. Not since 1956 had a player drawn the most first-place votes and finished third; Tommy McDonald of Oklahoma holds that distinction.

Bradford was the third person to win without receiving the most first-place votes, joining Notre Dame's Paul Hornung in '56 and Oklahoma's Billy Sims in 1978.

Any consolation, Tim? "Not really," he said with a

winners' group in the playoffs, while the last two dropped to the losers' bracket and must not lose again to avoid elimination.

After lunch break, eight teams were left standing. Joining the tandems of Berline-Matson and Saiki-Quinn on the group were the duos of Angie-Tyce Mister, Jeff Elliot-Louise Oakley, Lau-

already too late, as the Rays had the game in the bag.

SSHS 84—Ecalnea 25, Cadiang 24, Villanueva 17, Salem 5, Wesley 3, Paek 2, A. Palacios 2, Ngeskebei 1.

smile. "You lose, you lose."

"We still get to play in January and decide something a little bit bigger."

It was the closest margin between the top two since Nebraska's Eric Crouch edged Florida's Rex Grossman by 62 points in 2001. The only other time the gap between first and third was smaller was also '01, when Miami's Ken Dorsey was 142 points behind Crouch.

"Now I know what it's like for those people on 'American Idol,'" McCoy said. "My heart was pounding."

The award ceremony was held

rie Peterka-Randy Steele, Rob Epley-Melissa Halaby, Dale Roberts-Heather Kennedy, and Linda Anastacio-Mark McDonald.

Matson and Berline claimed the first finals ticket after beating Steele and Peterka, 15-12, and Quinn and Saiki, 15-13.

The pairs of Quinn/Saiki and Steele/Peterka dropped to the

KHS 63—Mettao 15, Kaipat 13, Reyes 9, Salas 8, Maratita 6, Ogo 6, Santos 3, Muna 2, Talamotu 2, Babauta 1.

Scoring by quarters: 13-16, 30-28, 53-all, 84-63.

at the Nokia Theatre in Times Square. When it was over, the finalists were whisked downtown with a police escort, about 50 blocks to the Sports Museum of America in lower Manhattan for a news conference.

"I was really nervous," Bradford said during his news conference. "I'd much rather play in front of 100,000 people than wait for an award to be handed out."

The Big 12 South was the epicenter of college football this season, with both the national championship race and Heisman chase turning weekly on games played by its three powerhouse teams.

losers' bracket and downed separates foes to set up their duel for the second finals ticket.

Quinn and Saiki prevailed in the rubbermatch, 15-13. Steele, who was the inaugural grass court champion last year teaming up with E.J. Lee, and Peterka settled for third place after beating Roberts and Kennedy, 15-9.

BERLINE

From Page 28

But the duo needed only extra minutes in Game 1 not another match to wrap up the tournament and take the title.

Sixteen pairs joined the second grass court co-ed tourna-

The Week in Sports

Record-setting feats top list

By **ROSELYN B. MONROYO**
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 REPORTER

The events that made last week's headlines are for the books.

Leading the list was the 2nd Annual Hell of the Marianas Century Cycle, which had Eli Torgeson winning back-to-back championship in the 100-kilometer race.

Torgeson did not only top the race for the second straight time, he also shattered the record he himself set during the inaugural event last year.

Torgeson's time of three hours, two minutes, 22.62 seconds in the second "Hell" broke his own mark of 3:20:33. The Commonwealth Health Center anesthesiologist finished the race more than 16 minutes ahead of his closest pursuer.

William S. Reyes Elementary School and Koblerville Elementary School will have their names written on elementary soccer school league history after ruling the Inaugural 2008 NMIFA U12 Inter-scholastic Football League.

The Kingfishers downed Koblerville in the girls' finals, 2-0, while the Umangs won the boys' title after beating Saipan International School, 2-0.

Saipan had its soccer events for schools in the past, but they were only a one weekend tournament, while the one coordinated by the Northern Mariana Islands Football Association and the Public School System was the first organized soccer league in the elementary level in the CNMI.

Pilipino Contract Workers Association also had its first league through the 2008 PILCOWA-San Miguel Beer Basketball League played at the CIC Centre Basketball Court in Garapan and earning the distinction of being the first champion of the PILCOWA caging was Diamond Auto Care.

It was an exciting finish for Diamond, which needed a basket from a player who had been missing all night to finally end its thrilling title showdown against MIGS.

Sonny Ranola canned a side jumper in the last four seconds of the second overtime to lift Diamond to a 101-99 title win over MIGS.

Jess Wabol added another record in CNMI golf when he notched his fourth RGA Cup.

Wabol won the 2008 RGA Club Championship ending his five-year drought. Wabol, a gold medalist in the 2006 Micronesian Games, won his third RGA Cup in 2002.

The Marianas Interscholastic Sports Organization held its first junior varsity basketball league for girls this year with Kagman's Lady Ayuyus taking the inaugural crown after beating Southern's Manta Rays in the finals, 65-36.

Another first this year was the 2008 NMIFA Women's Futsal Fall League played for more than two months at the Northern Marianas College Gymnasium.

Six teams joined the inaugural women's futsal league with Wild Bill's winning the championship after shutting out Marianas Technical Institute in the finals, 3-0.

Northern Marianas Badminton Federation had its second team tournament dubbed 2nd Traders Insurance Badminton Team Tournament with the Green All-Stars besting seven other squads for the championship.

Out of the 42 games, the All-Stars won 30 and lost 12.



ROSELYN B. MONROYO
 Diamond Auto Care's Elmer Esdreton, right, dribbles past Sonny Lerio of MIGS during their title game in the San Miguel caging at the CIC Centre Basketball Court in Garapan.



ROSELYN B. MONROYO
 Eli Torgeson makes a turn at Banzai Cliff during the 2nd Hell of the Marianas Century Cycle.



ROSELYN B. MONROYO
 2008 RGA Cup champion Jess Wabol.



ROSELYN B. MONROYO
 The Green All-Stars' Lea Estinopo chases the ball at the net while teammate Edwin Montoya looks on during their last game in the 2nd Traders Insurance Badminton Team Tournament against D'Bombers at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
 Members of Wild Bill's pose for a group photo following the championship game of the Inaugural 2008 NMIFA Women's Futsal Fall League Saturday at the Northern Marianas College Gymnasium.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
 Koblerville's Keoni Borja, right, and Saipan International School's Jordan Bucher battle for the ball during their title duel in the U12 league.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
 Members and coaches of William S. Reyes Elementary School pose for a group photo before their championship game against Koblerville.



ROSELYN B. MONROYO
 Kagman's Mikela Borja goes for an off-balance shot during their title game against Southern in the junior varsity division of the MISO caging.



Wood, Indians reach \$20.5 million, 2-year deal

Kerry Wood wasn't concerned the Cleveland Indians would find a red flag in his massive medical records.

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Saipan Tribune Sports

Record-setting feats top list

Leading the list was the 2nd Annual Hell of the Marianas Century Cycle, which had Eli Torgeson winning back-to-back championship in the 100-kilometer race.

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SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Back-to-back titles for Rays

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Same teams, same results. Saipan Southern High School won its title rematch against Kagman High School following an 84-63

victory in the junior varsity finals of the 2008-2009 Marianas Interscholastic Sports Organization Basketball League Friday at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

The Rays took last season's crown after a 115-102 win and an Ayuyus' fourth-quarter collapse allowed Southern to de-



ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Members and coaches of Saipan Southern High School pose for a group photo before their championship match against Kagman High School in the junior varsity division of the MISO caging Friday at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

Oklahoma QB Bradford wins Heisman Trophy



NEW YORK (AP)—The first person to congratulate Heisman Trophy winner

Sam Bradford was the player who won it last year—Tim Tebow.

The star quarterbacks from the top two teams in the country shook hands Saturday night, then embraced.

On Jan. 8, with the national championship on the line, it won't be so cordial.

Bradford, Oklahoma's amazingly accurate and quick-thinking passer, won the Heisman after leading the highest-scoring team in major college history to the BCS title game.

A year after Tebow was the first sophomore to win the Heisman, Bradford became the second and kept the Florida star from joining

See OKLAHOMA on Page 26



AP

Oklahoma football player Sam Bradford holds the Heisman Trophy after he was presented the award at a ceremony Saturday, Dec. 13, 2008 in New York.

fend the junior varsity championship.

The game was still in a deadlock at the end of the third period, 53-all, when the Ayuyus fell apart against the Rays' suffocating trapping defense in the payoff canto.

Southern's unforgiving defense held the Ayuyus scoreless in the first 3:38 of the fourth quarter.

Jester Kaipat broke the spell with his split free throw, but the Rays were already pulling away leading at 70-54, with 4:22

remaining on the clock.

Kagman made its first field goal in the 3:39 mark with Francisco Mettao drilling an undergoal stab and drawing a foul from John Paul Villanueva.

Mettao missed his bonus charity and that had been the story for the Ayuyus, who in the fourth period muffed 11 free throws, which could have changed the complexion of the game.

Southern also missed several chari-

ties, but fastbreak baskets off numerous steals and relentless defense made up for those muffed free throws.

Steals were not recorded in the game's scoresheets, but the Rays picked the Ayuyus' pocket more than 10 times in the crucial fourth canto.

Southern had two players firing 20-plus points in the championship match with the league's unofficial MVP Tristan Ecalnea drilling 25 points. Melvin Cadiang added 24

See BACK-TO-BACK on Page 26

Berline, Matson rule grass v'ball tourney

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER



The pair of Bruce Berline and Melody Matson needed extra points to pull off a 24-22 win over the tandem of Mili Saiki and Russ Quinn in the championship match in the 2nd Annual Reverse Co-ed

Grass Volleyball Tournament Saturday at Navy Hill's baseball field.

It was a come-from-behind win for Berline and Matson, who were down as much as five points, 3-8, in the finals. The pair of Saiki and Quinn took early control of the championship game with the former making a couple of good ball placements at the backline and the latter connecting on several jump serves.

Saiki and Quinn even moved a point

away from winning the match and forcing a deciding second set when they took a 20-19 lead.

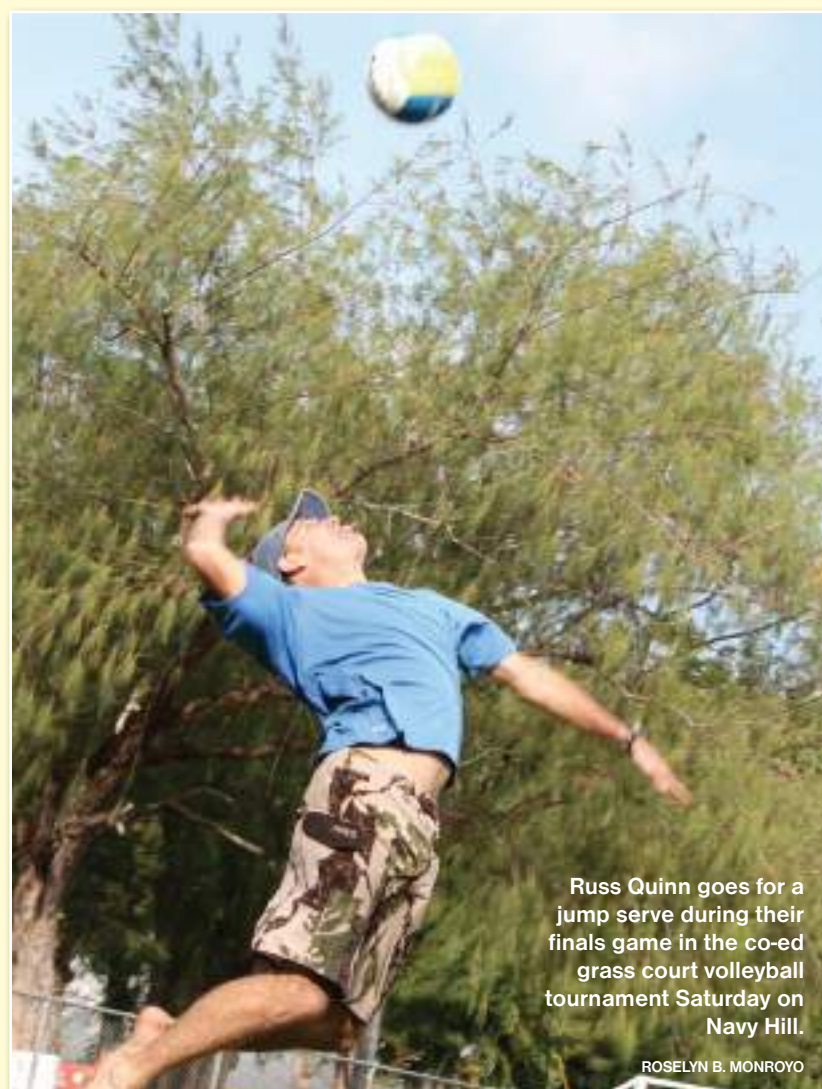
But Berline and Matson worked their way back to the game with the former diving for low balls and Matson scoring a few points on the net.

Matson and Berline had a twice-to-beat advantage in the finals after winning two matches in the playoffs.

See BERLINE on Page 26

Bruce Berline dives for the ball.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO



Russ Quinn goes for a jump serve during their finals game in the co-ed grass court volleyball tournament Saturday on Navy Hill.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO